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Airline workers need industrial solidarity



Gate Gourmet workers gathered near London's Heathrow Airport

As we go to press, Northwest Airlines mechanics and cleaners have struck rather than agree to massive subcontracting. The 5,400 members of the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association refused $176 million a year of concessions, striking after a government-imposed 30-day cooling off period expired.

AMFA official John Roby said workers could not accept the deep concessions Northwest was demanding. "They wanted to take 53 percent of our jobs away and the remaining people that were left, they wanted them to take a 25 percent pay cut." The airline has already eliminated half of its mechanic jobs in the last year, cutting back on maintenance and sending work out to subcontractors.

Although flight attendants had earlier said they might honor picket lines, their union joined pilots and the International Association of Machinists (representing baggage handlers and ticket agents) in ordering members to cross AMFA picket lines. Northwest had spent more than $100 million recruiting and training scab mechanics and flight attendants before the strike.

The flight attendants' decision to scab was a heavy blow, as federal law prohibits flying planes without a full crew. While it can take several days for maintenance needs to back up, the attendants (who are also resisting demands for deep concessions) could have shut down flights immediately. Although the Rail Labor Act, which covers airlines, "protects" the right to strike, Northwest threatened to fire any workers who honored the mechanics' picket lines. Workers on Northwest's commuter airlines are covered under separate union contracts, and a federal judge issued an injunction barring a solidarity strike.

However, the Independent Pilots Association, the pilots union for United Parcel Service, said it would refuse to fly goods for Northwest's cargo operation. "UPS pilots have the contractual right to refuse to move airplanes containing struck goods," union President Tom Nicholson said. "We will simply set the parking brakes on any UPS plane containing Northwest struck goods."

Heathrow: Solidarity betrayed

Although hundreds of flights were cancelled, and some planes had major equipment failures, Northwest has been able to keep flying because of this orgy of union scabbing – a stark contrast to the solidarity that shut down British Airways when London ground crews struck in support of food service workers striking a British Airways subcontractor.

Hundreds of British Airways flights were cancelled out of London's Heathrow airport – with the shut-down rippling throughout BA's entire system – August 11, and the effects continued to be felt days later.

The dispute began August 10, when Gate Gourmet fired 670 workers who stopped work when 130 temporary workers were brought in without notice. Many workers have been laid off at the facility, and the company insists more lay-offs are necessary. Union workers were ordered out of the plant by megaphone, and fired ***Air:** continued page 9*

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AFL-CIO splits: Business Unionism in Crisis

BY JON BEKKEN

The AFL-CIO suffered a devastating split as it celebrated the 50th anniversary of its founding July 25-28, with three unions representing nearly a third of its members quitting, and two others refusing to participate in its biennial convention. The Teamsters and Service Employees unions withdrew on the eve of the convention; the United Food and Commercial Workers quit the Federation as delegates were leaving Chicago.

The Change to Win Coalition kicked things off with a high-energy press conference packed with union staffers. The presidents of all six CWC unions – SEIU, Unite-HERE, Teamsters, UFCW, Laborers and United Farm Workers – spoke to an enthusiastic crowd, but the surface unity quickly dissolved when things got down to specifics. Four Coalition unions boycotted the AFL convention, two said they would participate. The officers were unwilling to say whether their unions would formally quit the AFL-CIO; the decisions trickled in over the next few days.

While CWC representatives said the split was over the need to "restructure" the Federation to focus resources on organizing, the closest thing to a specific illustration of differences on offer was when SEIU President Andy Stern contrasted the wording of the AFL leadership's and CWC's resolutions: where the AFL-CIO resolutions employed the word "should," the Coalition used the word "shall." Such momentous differences can not help but inspire a movement.

AFL-CIO officials, meanwhile, scrambled to hold things together in back rooms as a succession of politicians delivered stump speeches from the podium, chasing after what remains of a very lucrative gravy train.

There was no debate over the future of the labor movement, or over anything else of import. AFL officials agreed at the last minute to a resolution calling for the "rapid" withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq rather than face a floor fight. Rather than allow a contested election for officers, they cut a deal with veteran labor writer Harry Kelber in which he withdrew his candidacy in exchange for three minutes at the podium. (An attempt to rule him ineligible fizzled when Kelber produced records documenting his union membership.) Reports on the AFL's substantial stock portfolio took up time badly needed to develop a vision of unionism that recognizes the reality of the current class war. Politicians mouthed empty platitudes about unity while AFL-affiliated airline unions prepared to scab on the independent union representing Northwest mechanics.

Faced with the loss of $30 million a year because of the disaffiliation of the Service Employees, Teamsters and Food and Commercial Workers, delegates approved a 4 cent increase in the monthly per capita tax each international union pays the AFL-CIO. The convention also made permanent a special 8 cent per capita assessment earmarked for the AFL's political program. Much of this money will be used for the 2006 congressional and 2008 presidential elections.

Resolutions that had been proposed in an effort to placate CWC unions were also adopted, including establishing a more powerful Executive Committee dominated by the largest affiliates and creating Industry Coordinating Committees to oversee organizing targeting and set contract standards among unions in industry clusters.

Although the Coalition unions put forward a 10-point program they claimed would position the labor movement to rebuild its industrial power, in the end the debate collapsed into an argument over how much money unions should pay to support Federation activities. The larger unions that formed the Change to Win Coalition said the AFL-CIO should rebate half of their dues money to fund strategic campaigns to organize new members (not that the UFCW or Teamsters do much of that). AFL-CIO President John

continued on page 7

Do workers still have the right to socialize?

BY ALEXIS BUSS

In a stunning turn-around from recent decisions limiting workers' rights, the Bush-appointed U.S. National Labor Relations Board issued a June 7 ruling which requires that every trip to the bar, ballpark or café among coworkers should include discussion of wages, hours and working conditions. Otherwise, workers may not have legal protections for hanging out with one another.

Ok, not quite. The case, which originates in a charge filed by SEIU Local 24/7 against Guardsmark, a San Francisco-based security company, was filed to deal with three Guardsmark work rules relating to workers' abilities to talk to one another, and enlist the support of the public, including the firm's clients:

1) A "chain of command" rule, which says that on-duty workers may only take problems up a chain of command in a very proscribed way, and that workers may not register complaints with the company's clients;

2) A "no-solicitation" rule prohibiting solicitation and the handing out of literature while on duty or in uniform;

3) An "anti-fraternization" rule, which states, "While on duty you must NOT … fraternize on duty or off duty, date or become overly friendly with the client's employees or with co-employees."

The NLRB ruled that the chain of command and no-solicitation rules were illegal under the National Labor Relations Act. The chain of command rule was deemed illegal as written because of a 1980 case, *Allied Aviation Service Co. of NJ*, which ruled that workers are free to enlist clients or customers regarding workplace problems. Part of the reason why this rule was struck down was the question of whether or not the worker is on duty. The board went out of their way to suggest that if Guardsmark changes their rule to clarify that off-duty solicitation was not forbidden, the rule would be ok.

The no solicitation rule was deemed illegal as written because it included the prohibition against soliciting while in uniform, even if off work time.

Guardsmark said they wrote the rule that way because they were concerned that if someone talked union while in uniform, it might be construed that they were representing the company. The board gave some credibility to this claim by going on and on about Guardsmark's claim that it would have

***Fraternization:** continued on page 7*

Unions get the blame

An article in the July 25 *Chicago Sun-Times* states, "Even though labor unions usually get the blame for the steep price of conventions, the unions are hardly the only ones making the bills soar." The next paragraph explains that the unions made concessions in the last round of contract talks in order to make holding trade shows at McCormick Place more affordable.



After reading the article, it is quite plain to see that the real problem with high costs lies with the fact that one provider, Levy Restaurant Food Service Partners, has a monopoly on providing catering services to McCormick Place, charging rates such as $55 for a case of soda, $80 for a case of ice tea, and $24 for a dozen doughnuts – before taxes and a 19.5 percent service charge.

McCormick Place is owned by the city of Chicago, if I am not mistaken. I remember hearing a few years back about Mayor Daley publicly pleading with the labor unions to make concessions in order to lower costs for exhibitors. Rather than plead with Levy Partners to lower their prices (which he hasn't, ast least not in public), why doesn't he simply open contracts for catering to the lowest bidder? Is someone getting kickbacks here?

I can understand high costs for delivering food if the situation were, say, delivering supplies to the crew at a scientific research station in Antarctica, which is a difficult and expensive task. But that is not the case here in a major metropolitan area. In the article, a Levy spokeswoman defended the company by saying that costs are just as high at other convention centers, such as Las Vegas (which uses a different monopoly supplier, which charges $30 for a dozen doughnuts).

Clearly, the reason for high costs is not due to the costs of product or delivery, for Las Vegas is also a major city where those doughnuts can be bought on the street for $7.51.

I am not against free and fair business competition; I am a believer in a free enterprise system where people who have a product or service to sell reach agreements with those who want it. I have no problem with a fair business profit. What I do have a problem with is when it is done in a dishonest or deceitful way.

I am not suggesting that Levy is breaking any laws; rather, the monopoly situation within which they operate is at fault.

Granted, there is a middleman here. The Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority gets a cut of the catering bills – allegedly making participation more affordable by "equalizing" the costs. But something seems fishy here, and I still believe that costs could be lowered if the catering was opened to competitive bidding. I haven't seen any billing or balance sheets, but I can't help but think that one reason for the high costs is excessive profiteering on someone's part.

Although the workers who set up the trade shows are unionized, the article doesn't say whether Levy Partners workers are unionized as well. But it seems unlikely that they are being paid enough to account for these rates. I work for a company that participates in trade shows at McCormick, so please don't use my name.

A.W., Chicago

Wobbly exhibit in Edmonton

The Edmonton General Membership Branch is celebrating the IWW Centennial with a display of IWW materials from the Reuther Labour Archives in Detroit. This display is traveling across North America; Edmonton is the first Canadian city to host the exhibit at the Stanley A. Milner Library, where it will be on display until August 23.

IWW statement on the London terror attacks

The Industrial Workers of the World in the British Isles condemns the July 7, 2005, terrorist attacks against ordinary working people in London.

By deliberately attacking people going to work during rush hour, the attackers are seeking to turn workers into pawns and victims in their power struggle with the British state. The IWW condemns both the attackers and the British government for feeding a cycle of violence in the United Kingdom and other parts of the world.

The IWW urges workers to act in solidarity with one another and ensure that they protect working class interests, which will only be harmed by an escalation of the so-called war on terror.

The workers of the emergency services immediately sought to rescue, treat and prevent more harm. We hope their efforts are recognized not only now, but in the future as they cope with the impact of this work on their physical and mental health.

We urge working people across the British Isles to support one another and the families of those affected by these attacks. Solidarity is the answer to terrorism as an injury to one is an injury to all.



British Isles IWW conference

Wobblies are rebuilding the One Big Union in the British Isles and getting ready to organise. The British Isles Organising Committee held its ninth annual conference at the 1 in 12 Club of Bradford, West Yorkshire. Delegates travelled from as far as Edinburgh to participate.

Conference delegates approved a new organiser training proposal with the long-term goal of empowering every member to become an organiser. The first organiser training 'taster' session will be at the London Anarchist Book Fair on October 22.

Other proposals include the autumn relaunch of *Bread & Roses* and the first dues increase in nine years passed. Delegates also urged the newly elected secretary to list the IWW as a formal union with the Certification Officer of the United Kingdom. Members have voted by referendum twice in favour so it's time to get on with it!

Leonard Peltier moved to USP Lewisburg

On June 30, Leonard Peltier was transferred from Leavenworth prison, where he had been held for many years, first to Terre Haute (where he was placed in solitary confinement) and then to USP Lewisburg in Pennsylvania. Peltier, who the IWW recognizes as a class war prisoner, is appealing a life sentence arising from a firefight when the FBI attacked an American Indian Movement encampment on the Pine Ridge reservation. Prosecutors have admitted that they have no evidence that he actually shot the FBI agent he was convicted of killing.

The Leonard Peltier Defense Committee asks that supporters contact the prison to ensure that Leonard regains his hard-earned prisoner rights, including visitations, regular phone calls, religious rights and the ability to continue his painting. Letters should be polite, while making it clear that many people around the world are concerned about his wellbeing: Warden, USP Lewisburg, U.S. Penitentiary, 2400 Robert F. Miller Drive, Lewisburg PA 17837.

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Keeping the heat on Major League Baseball's sweatshop exploitation

BY SOURDOUGH SLIM

The summer of '05 will be remembered by many as a sweltering period when Major League Baseball endured more steroid scandals. But for Upstate N.Y. Wobblies, the heat was not just a product of temperature and stifling humidity.

The IWW conducted their second informational picket of the baseball season to call attention to the sport's highly profitable, extremely exploitative production of licensed team logo gear. The late July action was lively and Wobs distributed several hundred newsletters and "peanut surprise" packets to sometimes amused, often grateful baseball fans and tourists strolling Cooperstown's Main Street, adjacent to the Baseball Hall of Fame and the commercial row of shops dedicated to baseball souvenirs and memorabilia.

"Major League Baseball's dirty little secret can't hide too much longer from greater public scrutiny," Greg Giorgio of the Upstate N.Y. IWW said. "By keeping the heat on them here and in other cities where the games are played has to have an effect," especially in light of a report from the National Labor Committee issued the week following the action. Professional football and basketball sweatshop links have been newly discovered by the New York based group, raising issues that are bound to reflect back on baseball.

"That's why it's even more important at this time to keep the pressure on baseball about workers rights issues and their sickening, huge sportswear profits," Giorgio said. Upstate New York IWW members were closely watched by Baseball Hall of Fame security personnel who communicated by walkie-talkie to their bosses. "They don't like us in their neighborhood and neither do the team owners who have moved to arrest our members at a couple of major league ballparks."

A concerted effort will be made in Sweatfree Baseball activities by IWWs and like-minded sorts next year when the Major League Baseball All Star Game is played at PNC Park, Pittsburgh, in July.

Stay posted on this struggle for workers rights by contacting the Upstate N.Y. IWW Branch through the IWW Directory.

Education organizing committee in Pittsburgh

Recognizing the significance of the education industry in the area, the Pittsburgh GMB has formed an Education Workers IU 620 Organizing Committee. The goals of the PGH 620 Committee will be to educate academic workers about the IWW and industrial organizing, develop a solidarity network of education workers across the industry, and take concrete steps toward building industrial power across the region.

"We'd like to connect with every worker who brings education to the 98,000 students in the greater Pittsburgh area," said Kevin Farkas, chair of the committee.

"Very little is being done by the big business education unions to assert an industry-wide challenge to the corporatization of education and alienation of the education worker," Farkas added. "Academic labor is taking the hit in many ways, from the suppression of wages to the government sanctioned deskilling of teachers.

"Education workers simply cannot afford to complain endlessly about their situation while school boards, politicians, and CEOs continue pulling back on living wages, tenure, academic freedom, classroom materials, job security, workplace safety, co-governance, and other concerns."

All regional IWW 620 members and education workers – including cafeteria workers, professors, day care teachers, tutors, TAs, and work-study students – are encouraged to be a part of the committee working toward building a rank-and-file movement.

Billionaires rush to aid of StarBucks

BY DIVA DENZ, NYC INDYMEDIA

Manhattan Billionaires could not sip their lattes idly while StarBucks Corporation faced attacks by pro-union protesters on August 6. Instead, a bevy of Billionaires recognized our #1 specialty coffee retailer for its outstanding performance in union-busting and its continuing commitment to unlivable wages.

To touch off our defiant 'sip-in,' the Billionaires proffered a toast to "record-breaking profits" while Diva Denz phoned her stock broker, demanding 1,000 more shares of Starbucks stock. But this celebration was cut short by the arrival of, alas, StarBucks Union picketers! Dr. DeBooks, in a fury not often exhausted by a Billionaire, snatched one of the union's flyers and brought it inside the store. Reading out loud in unutterable indignation, he sounded off the union workers' grievances, including absurd things like livable wages, a decent number of hours, bathroom breaks, and similar claptrap that you might often hear the indentured class complain about.

Thankfully, we Billionaires distributed our own flyers to the customers, as we had our own points to make. Union-busting is "just good business," as we all know. And these unprecedented profits are surely leading to unprecedented pay raises, or at least Chairman Howard Schultz granted himself a 44 percent pay increase while leaving the baristas to their unlivable wages. Moreover, whining workers, if you need full-time status, just work more jobs!

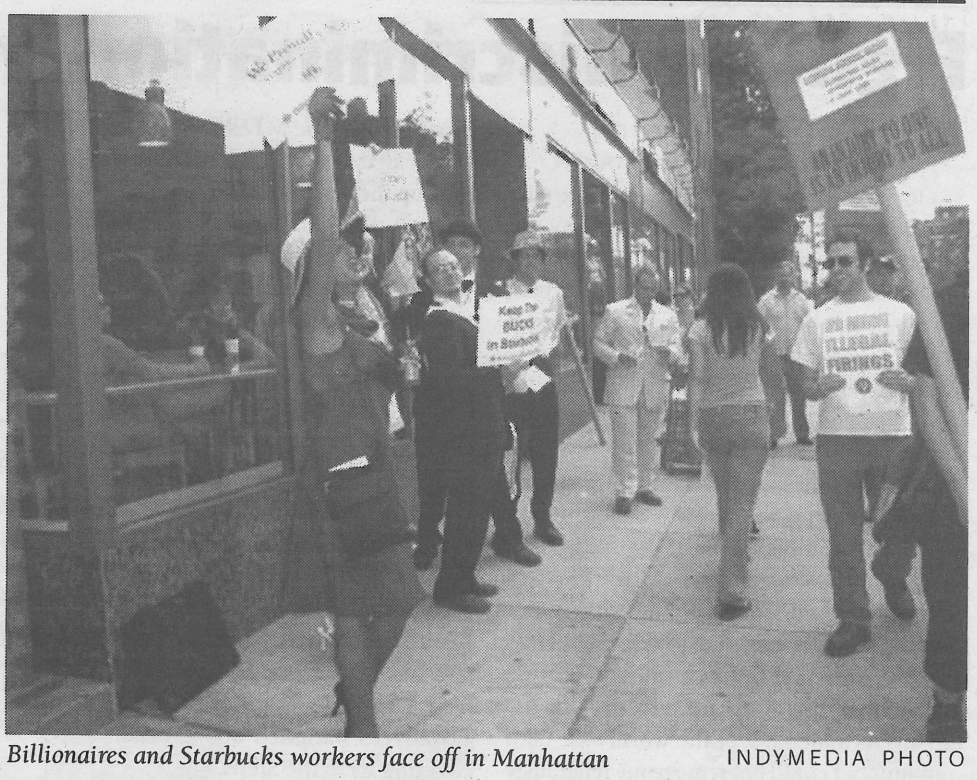
At this point, the Regional District Manager appeared at the scene in an outrage over the turn of events. Without missing a beat, Billionaire Monet Oliver D'Place greeted him with our prestigious Better Billionaires Business Bureau Award for Outstanding Unfair Labor Practices, and as the manager blushed, surely from the unexpected honor, the stealthily corrupt Walkin Ondapoor snapped a camera on his priceless face.

The manager proceeded to escort us out the door to suppress the rabble outside. But we Billionaires couldn't leave the comfort of the store without our own security. Indeed, the police arrived at the scene, while Buddy O'Bush, Ivy League-Legacy, and Ivan Yorz donned signs with slogans such as "We Proudly Screw StarBucks Workers," "Think Globally, Oppress Locally," and "Let Them Work for Beans." As the union workers rallied behind fired union worker Sarah Bender, we Billionaires chanted, "Sarah Bender, don't defend her, Get in there and work the Blender!" and "StarBucks Workers, Get a clue, Living wages aren't for you!"

We then marched in triumph to another crowded Starbucks store, where we were greeted, as usual, with cameras and spectators. Ivy League-Legacy assured everyone that there was nothing to fear, as we had the situation well under control. And lo and behold, we had our police arrive yet again to protect us. Pacifica radio station WBAI, which we are well on our way to privatizing, captured some footage from the spectacular contretemps between the Billionaires and the union workers and we Billionaires aired our under-represented sentiments concerning our prized corporation's profit pumping tactics.

Our bastion of Billionaires was, once again, triumphant. As we well know, "Big money, united, shall never be defeated!"

Huzzah, for keeping the BUCKS in StarBuck$!



Billionaires and Starbucks workers face off in Manhattan INDYMEDIA PHOTO

Montpelier Workers Union

Montpelier Workers' Union members have left the United Electrical workers and are now organizing with the IWW. The union is broadening its reach beyond the downtown district to organize retail and restaurant workers throughout the Vermont capital.

The Montpelier Workers Union will assist with workplace grievances and work for affordable rent and childcare in the region.

IWW Organizing in Columbus

General Executive Board member E. W. Wolfson of Pittsburgh visited Columbus, Ohio, July 23 to talk with workers interested in starting an IWW branch there.

Preamble to the IWW Constitution

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the earth.

We find that the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever-growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organization formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work," we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system."

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for the everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

Join the IWW Today

The IWW is a union for all workers, a union dedicated to organizing on the job, in our industries and in our communities both to win better conditions today and to build a world without bosses, a world in which production and distribution are organized by workers ourselves to meet the needs of the entire population, not merely a handful of exploiters.

We are the Industrial Workers of the World because we organize industrially – that is to say, we organize all workers on the job into one union, rather than dividing workers by trade, so that we can pool our strength to fight the bosses together.

Since the IWW was founded in 1905, we have recognized the need to build a truly international union movement in order to confront the global power of the bosses and in order to strengthen workers' ability to stand in solidarity with our fellow workers no matter what part of the globe they happen to live on.

We are a union open to all workers, whether or not the IWW happens to have representation rights in your workplace. We organize the worker, not the job, recognizing that unionism is not about government certification or employer recognition but about workers coming together to address our common concerns. Sometimes this means striking or signing a contract. Sometimes it means refusing to work with an unsafe machine or following the bosses' orders so literally that nothing gets done. Sometimes it means agitating around particular issues or grievances in a specific workplace, or across an industry.

Because the IWW is a democratic, member-run union, decisions about what issues to address and what tactics to pursue are made by the workers directly involved.

TO JOIN: Mail this form with a check or money order for initiation and your first month's dues to: IWW, Post Office Box 13476, Philadelphia, PA 19101.

Initiation is the same as one month's dues. Our dues are calculated according to your income. If your monthly income is under $1,000, dues are $6 a month. If your monthly income is between $1,000 - $2,000, dues are $12 a month. If your monthly income is over $2,000 a month, dues are $18 a month.

❑ I affirm that I am a worker, and that I am not an employer

❑ I agree to abide by the IWW constitution

❑ I will study its principles and make myself acquainted with its purposes.



Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Occupation: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Amount Enclosed: _____

Membership includes a subscription to the Industrial Worker.

Fighting discrimination at the MTA

BY HARRY HARRINGTON,
AKA SATHARI SINGH KHALSA

In June of last year the New York City Transit Authority removed me from my job as a train operator for wearing a turban. I had worked there for 23 years with a turban, nearly all as a train operator. The bosses at the MTA were quickly compelled by adverse media coverage to return me to my regular job in passenger service. The initial attempt to put me out of sight failed. My case had reached millions through TV and newspaper accounts that made the MTA officials look like narrow-minded bigots.

Not to be frustrated in their efforts to control nearly all aspects of their employees' lives, the MTA bosses then told me that I had to "pick" a job in the yard during the next job selection process if I continued to wear my turban. As a member of the worldwide Sikh community, I could not remove my religiously mandated head covering and as a union activist I could not let them violate my rights. The media campaign continued and the pick came and I did not pick a yard job but a job I had been working for the last 12 years on the number four Lexington Avenue Express line. Their threat to fire me for picking my regular job proved empty.

They gave up trying to force me out of my job, as the public response was just too intense. They then tried to make the Sikh workers wear corporate advertisements on their turbans: the MTA logo. The number of Sikh MTA employees participating in the case has now grown to six, all of whom refused to wear logos on their religious symbols. The six Sikhs just wanted to do what they had done for decades, wear their company blue turbans. The MTA threatened to fire me unless I wore the patch, so I wore it under duress.

Frustrated by the MTA's refusal to negotiate, we decided to sue. The Department of Justice took up the case, as did the Center for Constitutional rights and the Sikh Coalition.

Myself and the other Sikhs feel that the MTA's policy is discriminatory as only Sikhs have to wear corporate logos, other employees do not have to wear hats and the train operator uniform even has a style of hat issued without any identification. The Department of Justice did an investigation of the hat-wearing habits of train operators and found that most wore personal head coverings ranging from baseball hats to kufis and yarmulkes. The Department of Justice concluded that only myself and Sikh station agents were being forced to wear logos. The only employees harassed about head covering were the Sikhs.

As Sikhs, we are not allowed to play the part of the coward or docile lamb, we must fight tyranny...

The subway Sikhs resent this encroachment on their religion and its symbols by the MTA. The MTA has set itself up as a religious authority, telling Sikhs what to wear as part of their religious obligations. All of us were hired and promoted with turbans on. What we want is the same rights as other: the rights to wear hats without logos that we feel compromise the religious message of the turban with secular advertisements. The MTA is a state business that obtains most of its money from fares. They use the MTA logo in advertisement and the Sikh turban has now become another venue for their advertisements, thus degrading the turban with their commercialization. We subway Sikhs feel the purpose of the turban is to identify us as Sikhs, it is not a billboard.

The MTA has been unrelenting in implementing its disrespectful policy denying the Sikhs rights thought basic to American life. The MTA has harassed me and other Sikhs, threatening to fire us on several occasions.

The MTA has received protests from all over the world, from Swedish unionists to Punjabi farmers. The MTA has come to be perceived as a insular group of bigots throughout the English-speaking world after several BBC broadcasts. I myself have been on BBC/CNN broadcasts in Canada, United Kingdom, India and even Pakistan. My own cousins in Ireland, United Kingdom and friends in India have called or e-mailed support after seeing me on TV or hearing me on the BBC. My own trade union, Transport Workers Union local 100, has supported me as well.

The MTA's attacks on Sikhs, who are often mistaken for Muslims, is part of a wider campaign to stigmatize Middle-Eastern and South Asian peoples as terrorists. This policy lends itself to violence against these people and cultures in order to gain control of their resources. Many people forget that many people come to the West to escape the very fundamentalism they are lumped in with.

In the United States, several Sikhs have been shot and their houses of worship burned in the hysteria sweeping the country. Throughout their history, Sikhs have fought religious fundamentalists, with hundreds of thousands of killed, including several of our religious teachers.

My own fellow transit workers nearly all see this as an attempt by management to assert naked power over the workforce by demonstrating the extent to which they can ignore basic constitutional rights and past work practices. Several of my fellow transit workers have said the war and terrorist hysteria are being used by the MTA bosses to exert even greater control and implement their agenda including the destruction of our freedoms. They see the campaign against the turban as part of a greater movement to limit our freedom, regiment the workforce and destroy individuality of our multi-cultural workforce.

My fellow transit workers understand this campaign as a test of wills between workers who will not be coerced. Sadly, a rank-and-file newspaper said I was the only transit worker to have stood up to the MTA in years. I for myself have stood up, as that is the Sikh tradition. As Sikhs, we are not allowed to play the part of the coward or docile lamb, we must fight tyranny. To give up my fight would betray both the tenets of my faith and the best traditions of the labor movement, in particular the IWW.

Solidarity Forever

Writing web pages for workers

BY ERIC LEE

Jakob Nielsen is a name that will be familiar to those of you who design web pages. Nielsen is the world's leading expert on web site usability. Thanks to his efforts, a lot of web sites are a lot easier to use these days. (One of his columns on the subject of "why frames suck" is one of the reasons why so few web sites use frames anymore.)

These days Nielsen has been writing about other aspects of usability, including how to write for the web. He taught thousands of web designers that it's not enough to design a clean and attractive web site – the site has to be written for an audience which tends to scan, rather than read.

Now Nielsen has explored the question of designing web sites for "lower-literacy users." Nielsen estimates that some 30 percent of Internet users in the United States today fall into this category and expects that number to rise to 40% within five years. It goes without saying that many of those "lower-literacy users" come from the working class and the poor.

This makes his recommendations for designing web sites for such audiences particularly relevant to unions – but I wonder how many union web sites come close to understanding the issues involved.

Nielsen says that "lower-literacy users" tend to read a page word by word. They do not scan. As they have to spend considerably more time reading a page, they may lose patience and not complete the text.

Because of this, he makes several clear recommendations which should be adopted by web sites – including union sites – aiming to reach such audiences:

1. Use text aimed at a 6th grade reading level. (For regular web sites aimed at the general public, Nielsen urges an 8th grade reading level.)

2. Prioritize information – put the most important stuff up on top. (I'm reminded of the old journalistic advice to put the who, what, when, where and why in the first paragraph of a news story.)



3. Use static text, not animations.

4. Streamline page design – ideally, use only one column.

5. Optimize search to make it tolerant of mis-spellings.

Most of this is pretty good advice in general, and not only for "low-literacy users." If you want people to be able to read your web site on their mobile phones and PDAs, or to make the site more accessible to disabled readers, you'll be following some of these guidelines anyway.

How do union web sites stack up to these recommendations?

I've just had a look at the "Change to Win" site. Its opening paragraph is a single sentence consisting of no fewer than 79 words. That's not only unsuitable for "low literacy users" – that's simple bad writing.

As for the reading level required to understand the "Change to Win" web site, it's a whopping 13.6 – in other words, on average, a person would need to have completed some university to understand the page. The *Wall Street Journal*, by comparison, is rated at 11. That's right – it's easier to read *The Wall Street Journal* than it is to read this union web site.

The AFL-CIO web site comes in a 9.23 and the IWW is rated at 10 – better than "Change to Win," but still far above what Nielsen recommends.

In general, union web sites do not receive massive amounts of traffic. And this is still true, even though more and more union members and potential members have come online in recent years. There are many reasons for this – including the simple fact that many of our sites are boring. But another reason might be that for many members, the sites are simply too difficult to read. And that is

CBC locks out staff

As we go to press, the state-owned Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has locked out some 5,500 unionized employees, operating its English-language radio and television networks on autopilot with plenty of reruns and news and other programs recycled from the BBC. Local programming has been suspended in most of the country. CBC workers have set up pirate radio stations in some cities/

The CBC locked out workers August 15, after 15 months of negotiations with the Canadian Media Guild, which now represents both journalists and technicians. The CBC is demanding greater use of part-time and contract workers. The Guild estimates that 30 percent of CBC staff are already on temporary or part-time status, and it is unwilling to surrender any more full-time jobs.

Workers in Quebec and New Brunswick belong to different unions and continue to work but are not taking on outside work. The actors' union ACTRA says its members will not perform CBC work during the dispute; however, the impact is limited as few shows are currently in production.

Scottish Wobs demand wages

Scottish Wobblies are combining legal action and a round of meetings, petitions and fund-raising to reverse Parliament's decision to cut off funding for 14 workers employed by the Scottish Socialist Party delegation for the month of September.

The affected workers are represented by the IWW and the National Union of Journalists. Salaries for the party's four MSPs would also be cut off, along with allowances for constituent service. The IWW job branch is demanding the suspensions and financial penalties be overturned.

A protest is planned for Sept. 6 at 9 a.m. outside the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh, when the MSPs return to work after their extended summer break. Please sign the on-line petition (a link is at www.iww.org) demanding restoration of salaries and send letters of protest to presiding officer George Reid, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP, Scotland. Protests can also be emailed to: presiding.officer@scottish.parliament.uk.

Bosses must inform union before installing cameras

The District of Columbia Circuit Court of Appeals has overturned a National Labor Relations Board ruling allowing Anheuser-Busch to workers caught violating company rules by hidden-cameras.

The brewer fired five workers in 1998 after hidden cameras allegedly showed them smoking marijuana in an area where employees sometimes take breaks. Several other workers were disciplines for leaving their work area, sleeping on the roof of the St. Louis plant, and other violations.

The 2-1 ruling upheld a finding that the brewer committed an unfair labor practice when it installed the cameras in 1998 without bargaining with or notifying the union, Brewers and Maltsters Local 6.

The NLRB had ruled that the employees were not entitled to reinstatement or back pay because Anheuser-Busch had good cause to discipline them. But the court ruled that the company would not have known about the misconduct without viewing the illegal hidden-camera tapes.

The NLRB allows hidden cameras in organized workplaces as long as the boss bargains with the union, though employers do not have to say where cameras are placed.

Racist union-busting at Schawk Lithographers

Seven Puerto Rican and African-American members of Local One of the Amalgamated Lithographers of America have filed discrimination complaints with the New York Division of Human Rights against Schawk, Inc. in Manhattan.

Since merging with unorganized Seven Worldwide in May, the printing company has transferred workers to its non-union facilities or laid them off. Seventeen of 33 lithographers at Schawk's 28th Street facility were fired, including every minority worker.

At an August 11 news conference, Puerto Rican workers complained of substantially lower wages that their white counterparts despite more than 20 years of service.

Representatives of the Amalgamated Lithographers, a Teamsters affiliate, were also in the face of shareholders at the May annual meeting near Schawk's Chicago headquarters. The company operates 41 facilities that employ over 400 union members.

In 2004, the company cited financial difficulties to demand concessions. While the rank and file took a pay freeze, executive officers' compensation, including for CEO David Schawk, rose over 60 percent.

Since the merger, fired workers have been offered only eight weeks severance. Sales at Schawk have more than doubled this year, despite continuing lay-offs at plants around the country. In 2004, the company had an operating profit margin of 15.7%.

Rank & file confront labor crisis

As AFL-CIO delegates arrived in Chicago July 23, a rank-and-file labor conference was meeting at Truman College to discuss what might be done to rebuild the labor movement. Five Wobblies were among the 100 or so who showed up to hear an array of speakers from around the country tell horror stories about how they and their fellow workers have been treated by the business unions.

"This so-called Great Debate is a complete fraud, because the voice of America's rank-and-file workers is not being heard at all," said Steve Zeltzer, a member of Operating Engineers Local 39 in San Francisco.

Mike Griffin, a veteran of the Staley strike of the 1990s, said workers must take on their unions before they can take on the bosses. "As soon as workers begin an effective struggle, ... the international unions swing into action to undermine that struggle." "The ship of labor is floundering on a sea of deceit; the deceit of its own collusion with industrial bosses against workers," Griffin added.

Chicago Wobblies distributed a leaflet offering solidarity unionism as an alternative to business unionism and argued for a direct action approach during the discussion.

An appeal to the rank & file

We can all agree that the AFL-CIO, and business unionism in general, is a dead end for the working class in North America. We need a new international labor movement; one that is based on workers' self-organization and on the recognition of the inevitable conflict between labor and capital.

We of the Industrial Workers of the World have stayed close to our roots and feel that we have some ideas and lessons, learned from bitter experience, for such a new labor movement. We feel that a new labor movement will have to return to the strategies and tactics of the workers' movement before its descent into the bureaucratic quagmire of business unionism if it is to go forward.

We have a few suggestions on how to proceed:

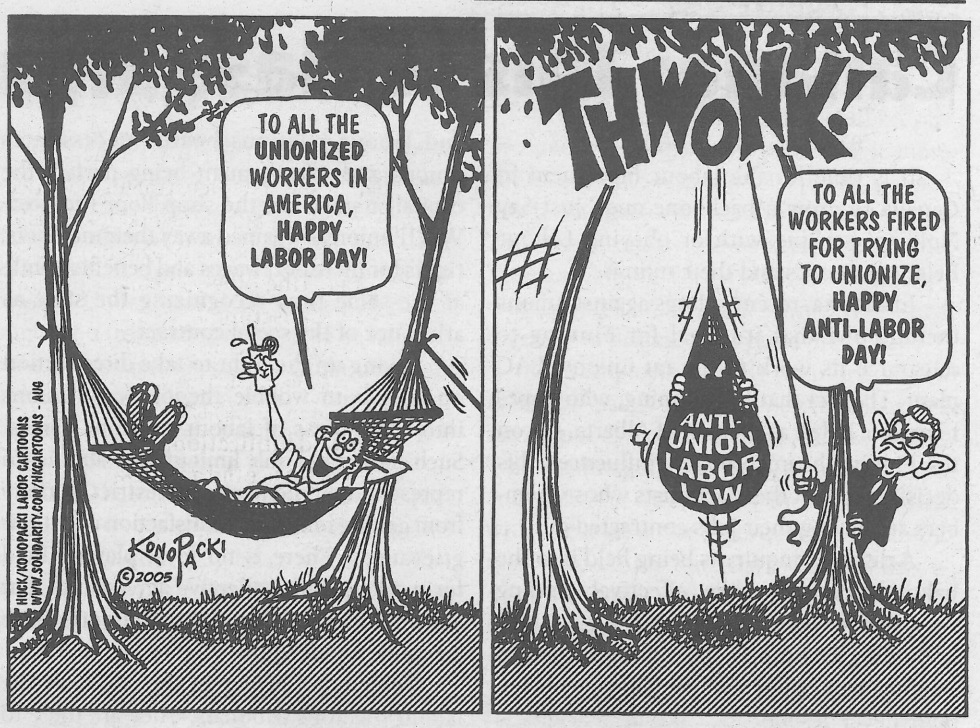
1. Organize the unorganized into self-managed industrial unions. Unions built from the grass roots by worker organizers. Unions run by the members to address their own needs and aspirations on the job. Unions that are independent of government and political parties. Unions that welcome all wage workers and unemployed, regardless of nationality, race, gender, political or religious creed, sexual orientation, etc, on the basis of strict equality. Unions in which all officers are directly elected by those they serve and are immediately recallable by the membership. Unions in which remuneration for officers is tied to the average wage of the workers involved; where term limits for officers are strictly observed; and where the officer returns to the job when their term in office is over. We call this Solidarity Unionism.

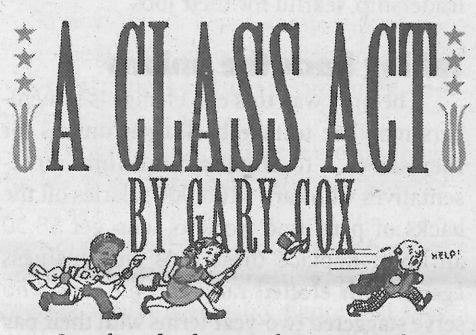
2. Re-organize the mis-organized of the business unions through establishment of shop committees that can take direct action on the job in pursuit of workers' needs outside of the restrictions of legal collective bargaining agreements. We reject dues check-off because joining a union should be a conscious commitment to solidarity, not a "condition of employment." We reject no-strike deals because we need to be able to act to defend and extend our rights at every opportunity. We reject "management's rights" because they are inimical to our own.

3. Establish horizontal links between and among unions and shop committees to foster solidarity on a local, regional, national and international level. Build workers' centers in every community to reach out to all sectors of the working class and unemployed, including their kids.

4. Solidarity Unionism recognizes no restriction on what we should strive for. Health and safety at work, the environmental and social impact of what we produce, shorter and flexible hours of labor, universal health care – everything is fair game! Ultimately, we reject the employing class's so-called "proprietary rights." *We want to gain control of the means of life!*

We offer these ideas in the hope that the new labor movement that will necessarily emerge from the shipwreck known as business unionism can avoid the mistakes of the past that have led us to the present impasse.





One hundred years have passed since 200 delegates gave birth to a new union, the Industrial Workers of the World, and declared class war at Brand's Hall in Chicago; so plenty of time has elapsed for us to evaluate the vision of the IWW founders and compare it with the direction taken by the AFL-CIO.

Many of the founders of the IWW were veterans of brutal labor struggles. Mother Jones, Father Thomas Hagerty, Vincent St. John and "Big Bill" Haywood were witnesses and victims of the brutality in the mining districts. Eugene V. Debs tasted the vengeance of the ruling class in the Pullman strike as president of the American Railway Union.

Most of the delegates had similar tales to tell. Their various personal experiences, and the assassination of the anarchist leaders of the Eight Hour Day movement in Chicago in 1886, had convinced them that the brutality, greed and authoritarian nature of capitalism promised nothing but slavery and authoritarian rule for working folks in the future.

They had come to the conclusion that the economic power of the capitalists, coupled with their control of state power, was too great to be fought with traditional craft unions. Their answer, plain and simple, is in the preamble to the constitution of their new union: "The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace as long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few who make up the employing class have all the good things of life. Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wage system."

For the IWW, there were only two classes of citizens any worker needed to consider: the ruling class, i.e. those who owned the means of production, and the working class, all the rest of us who do the work for these owners. The owning class always supported one another during times of conflict with workers, no matter their differences at other times. This is a constant and you can witness this same behavior today, although aid is more subtly given, often through complex bank maneuvers. The founders of the IWW felt workers needed to support one another in the same manner, regardless of our differences, if we were going to have a chance in this struggle against a ruthless, powerful capitalist class for control of our lives.

But the AFL-CIO is rarely found supporting one another's strikes in any effective manner, let alone supporting unorganized workers' struggles or unions in other countries. I rarely hear them mention a "working class." Why is this so important to the IWW?

For the IWW founders, the first order of business was to organize as a class – not just locally but globally; not just the skilled, but all working people; not just the privileged but all black, white, brown, Jew, Christian, Muslim, and atheist working people so that we can't be used against one another in wage wars. Too often, lately, I've heard the old excuse from AFL-CIO leaders that the 1947 Taft- Hartley Act prevents it from carrying out acts of solidarity with other unions. Brothers and sisters, if all the ruling class has to do to keep us subservient is pass laws that render workers impotent, it will. It owns the lawmakers. There were laws which made it illegal to merely discuss unions on public streets in the early 1900s. The IWW initiated Free Speech Fights, filling dozens of jails with thousands of Wobblies, and won our right to speak freely on the streets. This right was won by disobeying the law back then, and, like Dr. King, we must do the same thing now.

The ruling class cannot tolerate democracy or competition. Democracy undermines corporate power so, in this country, it has eliminated democracy by controlling it. CEOs move back and forth from top government jobs to top corporate jobs in a constantly flowing circle. Competition is being eliminated in an ever-increasing feeding frenzy. It is impossible for most of us to keep up with the mergers.

IWW founders predicted that if we didn't organize as a class, hunger and want would increase to intolerable levels. As the corporations became larger, more powerful, and multinational, they would play us off against one another because we would have no network of defense. I don't think they knew the name Wal-Mart, but maybe. In 2004, almost 9 million of the poorest of our class *starved* to death; 24,000 a day. Witness Sudan, Niger, Indonesia and India on the news this evening.

"There can be no peace as long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people. ... Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world *organize as a class,* take possession of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wage system."

The AFL-CIO is trying to restructure, but the smell of death is all around it...

Why did the founders of the IWW feel it necessary to take complete possession of the earth and the machinery of production? The AFL-CIO did not feel that way. They were content to allow corporations to make all the business decisions as long as their workers received fair wages. They trusted U.S. corporations to remain loyal to U.S. citizens.

The IWW founders felt that possession of the means of production was necessary for two main reasons: One, we need to take possession in order to save the earth. Corporations will take profit from their dying mother. They are not in business to protect our environment. The FBI bombed Judy Bari because she was telling loggers that the IWW doesn't want to stop logging in the U.S. We all need homes. She told the loggers that the IWW wants loggers to decide what to log and how to log, and that we don't trust corporations to feel any responsibility for our planet; and the loggers were beginning to listen. Two, we need to take possession of the means of production in order to share the fruits of production cooperatively with all working people to end, to the best of our ability, hunger and war anywhere and everywhere on this earth. Corporations have never shown anything but contempt for the environment, the welfare of working people, or global peace – large profits are made from warfare.

"Abolish the wage system." For 200 years in our capitalist system, we had different types of workers. Slaves were bought openly on the "slave market." A slave's value was determined generally by how healthy he/she appeared stripped naked. The rest of us were forced to rent by the hour whatever talent we possessed to those who control the means of production. We might rent out our backs, arms, hands, skills, talents, beauty, brains or sex organs, but we must rent something of ourselves to the ruling class or starve. Our value is determined by a "labor market."

Take note, we are both "market" commodities. The rent we receive is called "wages." If workers control the means of production, we will decide the value of our labor for ourselves and determine for ourselves how to share the remuneration and it will no longer be degrading or without human compassion.

After the Russian Revolution, the ruling class panicked and made plans to destroy the IWW before it became any more popular. The Palmer raids that followed the First World War seriously wounded the IWW, but good ideas cannot be destroyed – they smolder, waiting for a better time.

AFL leaders decided to hook its wagon to corporate capitalism and squeeze as much wages as it could from the system for its members. In this manner, what most refer to as a "middle class" life was achieved for a privileged minority of organized workers.

I find it difficult to call this self-serving behavior "union." The IWW warned that minor rewards could be achieved by going to bed with capitalism but they would be short-lived and would last only as long as the owners found this arrangement profitable. The IWW believed that as capitalism evolved owners would be forced to imitate the largest, most ruthless corporations in order to survive the competition. In the past, ruthless competition between corporations has always meant cutting labor costs first. Look out your window. Wal-Mart leads the way.

The AFL-CIO can list tens of thousands of heroes and many short-term successes during its heyday, but the whole "middle class" illusion is now imploding in front of our eyes. Slave labor is back with a vengeance; only now the owners transport the work to the slaves instead of bringing the slaves here. The AFL-CIO is trying to restructure, but the smell of death is all around it. How can they watch as the richest corporations send their union jobs to whichever country will sell its labor for the lowest figure; watch them steal and pillage the life savings of its members, their pension funds; sit and watch as these same corporations blatantly take over our government lock, stock and sell-out

continued on page 8

Canada: This is class war

BY EUGENE PLAWIUK

It is time for the labour movement in Canada to grow a backbone and "Just Say No!" to working with or obeying Labour Relations Boards and their rulings.

In Alberta, recent rulings against unions include one that it's legal for Finning to outsource its work to the rat union CLAC plant. The fact that Jim Dinning, who hopes to replace Ralph as Premier of Alberta, sits on the Finning board probably influenced this decision against the Machinists whose members are having their jobs contracted out.

A disputes inquiry is being held into the Lakeside Packers strike, effectively ending the strike for 60 days, but with no guarantee of binding arbitration. The union requested binding arbitration and the Minister of Labour never responded. Lakeside Packers is owned by the world's biggest meat merchant, Tyson Foods. Tyson is happy. Their plant is operating. Supervisors are telling employees the union is powerless.

There is no fair or level playing field for workers in Alberta labour relations. The game is rigged in favour of the bosses. While unions have representatives on the Labour Relations Board, so do the bosses. In this case the government picked a management lawyer representing the anti-union Construction Industry Merit Shops as chair.

And now we have Telus (the B.C. phone company) getting support from the Canadian Industrial Labour Relations Board and the Supreme Court of British Columbia. If this isn't enough to ring the clarion bell of class war I don't know what will.

Sacred contracts

Unions in Canada believe the contract is sacred, they actually believe in contract law and abide by it. While the employers know contracts are made to be broken, and find a way around the contract any time they can.

The management rights clause – the recognition that capital dominates the workplace and is the owner of the means of production – solidified the AFL-CIO industrial unions as the handmaidens of capitalist production in the post-war era. Workers' power was now not a revolutionary power to overthrow the capitalist system, but a form of fixed capital to be bargained with for the crumbs from an expanding capitalist system.

The strength of the IWW was its refusal to give up the right to wobble the job – no contract was signed that gave up the right to walk off the job over grievances. The development of the management rights clause is key to the development of a whole industry of paid reps, service or insurance model unions, labour and employer lawyers, mediators, arbitrators, all functionaries of the state.

The growth of the labour law industry and labour relations boards necessitates unions and management being part of the capitalist state. On the shop floor the post-WWII unions bargained away their members' rights for increased wages and benefits, while at the same time recognizing the state as arbitrator of the social contract.

Giving up the right to take direct action on the job, to 'wobble' the job, leads unions into the morass of labour relations games. Such clauses not only limit unions' abilities to represent their members but restrict workers from getting immediate satisfaction over their grievances. There is no level playing field for workers with collective agreements that allow for management rights and a grievance arbitration procedure.

There is no justice in the courts or the labour relations tribunals. They are there to make sure production is not disrupted by strikes – even short strikes that would resolve an immediate grievance on the shop floor.

They exist to limit, restrict and make illegal direct action by workers. And to have our unions sit on these boards, and play tripartite footsie with the bosses is what drives workers mad, as in angry. Because we always lose.

Business unions promise to make workers toe the line; they act as agents of Law and Order on the shop floor. What's good for GM is good for the CAW.

Only when workers strike and run their own strike committees can they take power over their lives. A case in point is the Lakeside Packers strike; workers were ready to strike, and were stopped not by a government order but by the capitulation of their well-paid UFCW Local 401 president Doug O'Halloran because he didn't want to go to jail.

Doug is a deal maker – he wants a contract, he's looking after the UFCW's best interests. He and the UFCW don't care about their members' interests. Whatever happens, they have a pool of dues-paying members to fatten their bank accounts.

You'd think with all their money and lawyers, O'Halloran would have the guts to challenge an unfair anti-worker ruling on behalf of the folks who pay his lucrative salary. Nope, not a chance.

You would think that the labour movement, that so-called house of labour, would organize their members to join mass pickets during strikes. Instead they make a token show on the picket line.

To really shut down Telus would take thousands of workers marching the picket line. And is this likely to happen? Nope. Most unions are lucky to mobilize two or three well-paid reps to attend the picket line.

The strike is the weapon of the class; it is the fundamental tool of class war. Even the bosses know this. For a strike can be the match that lights the prairie fire of the General Strike. When a union wins a strike it is a victory for all working people; when they lose it is a defeat for all working people.



A case in point is when UFCW struck Safeway in the early 1990s and accepted a roll-back in wages for new employees. UFCW is no small union; they are one of the largest private sector unions in Alberta and their acceptance of a roll back contract impacted the whole labour movement in the province.

The Klein government then used this as an excuse to bring in wage roll backs for public sector workers. He also had the NDP government in Ontario as an example of another provincial government trying to get public sector unions to accept roll backs.

Another case is when UFCW led workers out on strike at Gainers. Instead of occupying the plant and demanding it be put under workers and farmers control (it was originally owned by the Alberta government before it was sold off at a fire sale price). Even the leadership of the Alberta Federation of Labour at the time called for workers to occupy the plant. Instead, UFCW came to a sweetheart arrangement to sacrifice Gainers in Edmonton and a plant in Burlington if owner Maple Leaf Foods would open a new plant and hire its members in Brandon, Manitoba.

All this was done under the leadership of Doug O'Halloran who speaks not in the interests of the workers but in the interests of UFCW Inc. Now he cries crocodile tears when the government halts the Lakeside Packers strike, a strike he really didn't want. For O'Halloran and UFCW the strike is the threat they use to get a collective agreement. It's all about the collective agreement and the Rand formula, it's never about what's best for workers. No matter how bad or good the contract is, it is always good for UFCW Inc.

If the local labour councils, the Federations of Labour as well as the CLC are the so-called house of labour, then it is a dilapidated slum. The leadership is terrified of losing their jobs. They suffer bureaucratic senility. They will always prefer the backroom deal with the bosses or the government to the idea that this is class war and that the purpose of unions is to overthrow capitalism.

They oppose plant occupations because they are illegal; they oppose wildcat strikes because they're illegal too. But isn't that why we have high-priced labour lawyers, to get us out of jail? Nope, that can't be the real reason. The reason is that these actions are taken by the rank and file 'out of the control' of the paid reps and leadership. And if such ideas spread, it might lead to, horror of horrors, a General Strike.

Even the most militant leader or leadership in the labour movement accepts their role in upholding Law, Order and Good Government. And once they do, it will always be the workers who get screwed.

The reason is simple: workers who do take strike action soon realize they have given up all to win the fight. Not so their leadership who see it as just another moment in collective bargaining. This is why workers on the line are always more militant than their union leadership.

Professional union reps and paid hacks are not capable of challenging the bosses or their government cause well they are paid not to. They can't organize the workers who pay their salaries, because they are out of touch with the rank and file. Or worse yet they are opposed to rank-and-file control because it threatens their job security.

They promote local officers to political positions in their unions, offering them careers and lucrative jobs as reps, as long as they toe the line. They take the best and brightest activists and put them into the union machinery to become another cog in the wheel.

If workers organize themselves, the first to attempt to squash them aren't the politicians, cops or lawyers, it's their own union leadership, fearful for their jobs.

Taking back the unions

The only way this can change is if members mobilize to take back their unions for themselves – to eliminate full-time representatives who earn $100,000 salaries off the backs of part-time workers who get $8.50 an hour. Replace these reps and business agents with elected rank-and-file reps who serve staggered two-year terms with their pay and benefits no more than the highest-paid worker on the job.

Rank-and-File strike committees should be directly elected by members and be the only ones allowed to negotiate with the bosses. Union locals need democratically elected executives and committees of members, and the right to make their own decisions.

Locals must not give up the right to strike in collective agreements – we need to reinforce this basic right with a clause that states that members of the local will not cross other workers' picket lines.

Unions should not participate in Labour Relations Boards, arbitration or Industrial Relations. Any action taken by the state – whether it is an injunction or attempts at arrest – should be met with mass action, not only by the union affected but by all unions in the region. Fines must not be paid.

Union locals need to form flying picket squads of all members, to make sure that all strikes or lock outs are kept short and effective, based on the principle of An Injury to One is and Injury to All, and The Longer the Picket Line, the Shorter the Strike.

All grievances must be solved as quickly as possible on the shop floor, or in the institution where they occur by a meeting of the union steward and management. The union has the right to use any and all tactics to solve their grievances, including the sit down strike, rotating strike, wildcat strike, and plant occupation. Use of the standard strike tactic will be reserved as a weapon of last resort. If it is applied, the union will mobilize for sympathy strikes, hot cargoing and building a call for a general strike.

These are just a few suggestions on how we can take back our unions from the labour hacks and well-paid bureaucrats who see the labour movement not as a class struggle but as their career opportunity. A career they make off our backs.

A longer version of this article can be found at http://plawiuk.blogspot.com



The IWW: 1905 - 2005

Left: A foreign-language pamphlet from the IWW collections at the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs. Over the years the IWW produced its most popular pamphlets in many foreign languages.

A traveling exhibition of photographs and other materials from the IWW Archives is presently touring North America. Several historic artifacts will go on display Oct. 21 as part of a larger exhibition at Wayne State University in Detroit.

Anyone interested in the collection, or in adding to it, should contact William LeFevre at the Archives at telephone number 313-577-2789 or by email at William.LeFevre@Wayne.Edu.

Fraternization and organization...

continued from page 1

been fine with them if workers looking to organize covered up the company insignia while doing union business. Ultimately, the Board found the rule unlawful for three reasons: 1) it was too broad and workers could reasonably interpret the rule to mean no talking union in uniform off work time, 2) the justification for the rule was a defense to an allegation that had never been made, and 3) even though the company notified some employees that they could talk union with the insignia covered up, they did not notify enough employees about this.

What makes this case important and unexpected is that the fraternization rule was upheld. Prior to this ruling, any labor organizer would view such a rule as a straight-up illegal impediment to organizing, along the same lines of a boss telling a worker, "You're organizing a union and now you are fired" (which still appears to be illegal.)

In reaching this decision, the Board relied on two recent decisions: *Lafayette Park Hotel* from Clinton's 1998 board, and *Lutheran Heritage Village-Livonia* from 2004. In *Lafayette*, the NLRB upheld a work rule that said workers were "not allowed to fraternize with hotel guests anywhere on hotel property." Clinton's board said that this work rule could not reasonably be interpreted by workers to mean that they would be fired for trying to enlist customers' support for concerted activity, which is, of course, legal. Like, who doesn't know that? Gosh! Freakin' idiots!

So now Bush's board applied this logic to say there is no material difference in the work rules of the hotel and Guardsmark, and so Guardsmark is ok.

Lutheran Heritage Village is mostly about whether a work rule prohibiting "abusive and profane language" was unlawful. This case worked itself into *Guardsmark* because it also touched on the question of whether a worker would reasonably figure that they could not exercise their rights under the NLRA. Other than that, the case bears no similarity at all. *Lutheran* involved the firing of a union activist for a verbal spat with other workers after a string of what appears to be pretty write-ups for minor infractions, many of which involved workers ratting on each other in what was clearly a very hostile work environment.

There are specifics to *Guardsmark* that make it unlikely that this kind of work rule will be adopted wholesale by all kinds of employers. The board said that because Guardsmark is a security outfit, the company has specific security concerns about too much friendliness between their guards and their clients. It wasn't mentioned in the case, but the NLRA already accepts this distinction for security personnel by requiring that they not be combined in bargaining units with other kinds of workers. And while security work is often solitary, most employers would have to do a lot of morale-crushing reconstructing of workplaces to keep workers from "fraternizing."

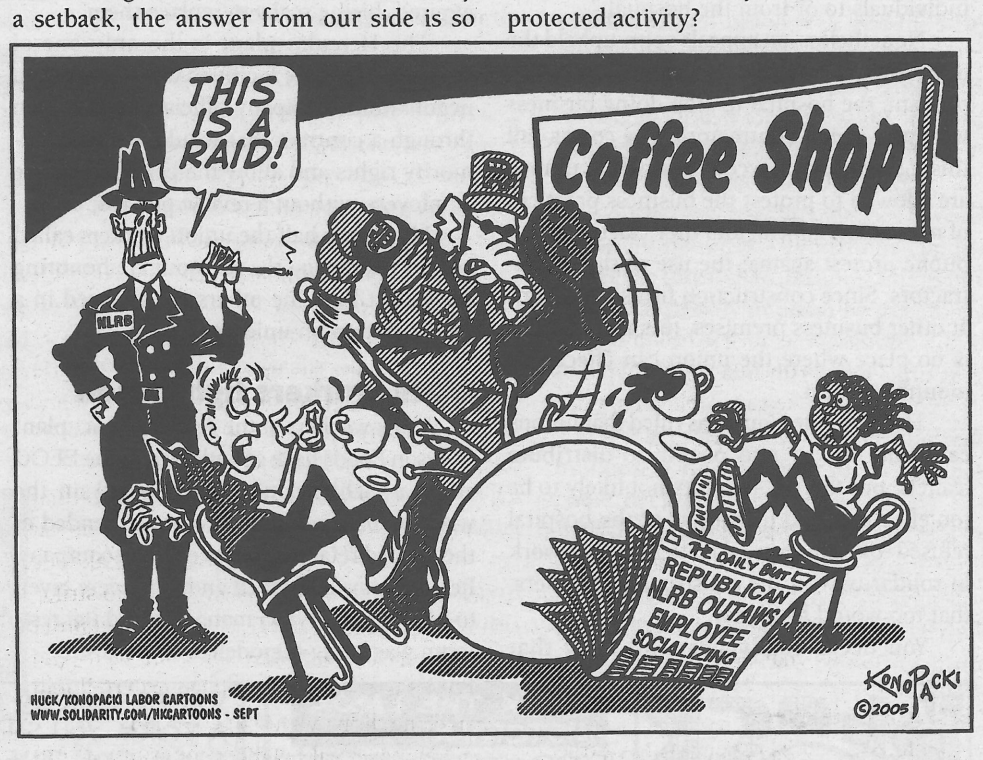
However, both *Lafayette* and *Guardsmark* presume a highly technical knowledge of the NLRA's Section 7 rights by ordinary workers. Being a non-lawyer, I will be the first to concede that any worker who applies his or herself to understanding labor law can develop a basic understanding of what is and is not protected under the Act. But this blows my mind: the Board says a rule against fraternization is ok because nobody would reasonably figure from that that it's not ok to talk to your co-workers about workplace problems.

Clearly the Board is not looking to carve out a safe space for workers to get together and make a union. This case predicts safety only for highly professionalized and routinized labor organizing. But in my entire life as a worker, I can't think of a time when I've been hanging out with a co-worker off work time and issues at work haven't come up for discussion. Under the NLRB's *Guardmark* rule, it might be a firing offense for us to be hanging out together in the first place (if the employer has a no-fraternization rule) – but once we started complaining about the job, labor law would suddenly kick in to protect us.

It has been a bit alarming over the past couple of weeks to hear the way this case has been described by labor activists – that the NLRB has ruled that off-work socializing is now illegal. While this decision is clearly a setback, the answer from our side is so simple: just 'effin talk about your problems at work, then.

Let's not let this case put a chill on our prospective campaigns by making it more confusing than it is. The Board did not say that it is illegal for workers to fraternize – just that bosses can pass rules restricting fraternization as long as workers won't "reasonably" understand them to prohibit workers getting together to discuss workplace problems.

If an employer is going to enforce such a rule, how will it be done? Will it be workers ratting out each other for asking to hang out? Will the hanging out need to happen first, and then the discussions the workers had with one another be reported to figure out if they were simply fraternal (whatever that is – I'm just glad it doesn't apply to me because I'm a woman) or if they involved concerted, protected activity?



Canadian workers now better educated, poorer

A new report by the Canadian Labour Congress concludes that while people under age 25 are better educated than their predecessors, they earn much less. "Adjusted for inflation, young working men in this country, aged 15 to 24, earn 25 per cent less than men of the same age group [in the 1970s and 80s]. Young women seem to do a bit better, earning 20 per cent below what was paid to young women in the workforce 30 years ago."

Many Canadian jobs now pay less today than they did 20 years ago, even without adjusting for inflation. Meanwhile, students are racking up crushing debt as a result of cuts in funding for higher education. Young workers of colour experience higher unemployment, longer unemployment, lower salaries, and fewer promotions – even when they are Canadian born (and not held back by issues of language or of recognition of international training credentials or work experience).

Meanwhile, the official unemployment rate has increased to 6.8 percent.

Telus blocks union web site

In July Telus blocked its one million Internet subscribers' access to the pro-union Web site Voices for Change – and 766 unrelated web sites hosted by the same server – for several days, in order to stop its locked-out workers from getting the word out to Telus customers. The cut-off appears to have been illegal under a section of the Canadian Telecommunications Act prohibiting unjust discrimination in the provision of telecommunications service.

Richard Rosenberg of Electronic Frontier Canada said Telus's action is contrary to ISPs' traditional reluctance to become involved with content. "For the Internet it's really an awful thing if ISPs play this activist role, especially in their own self interest."

AFL-CIO splits...

continued from page 1

Sweeney said the federation should increase spending on organizing, and also spend even more on politicking. But neither advocated any fundamental change in how the AFL does business, even if they did hold very different views of who should run the operation.

Former United Auto Workers regional director Jerry Tucker noted "how shallow, myopic and unplugged from today's worker reality the so-called debate has remained... This has been a ping-pong match between guardians of a failed legacy – a faction fight to see who can best restore business unionism and labor's junior partnership with capital."

Leftists who've entertained visions of Change to Win as a scrappy ground-level organizing outfit should have been discomfited by Hoffa's talk of "staffing up" and professionalization of organizing (even if that might be a welcome contrast to the patronage hacks who have been in charge of the Teamsters' pitiful organizing attempts), but now that Change to Win has hired 55 public relations specialists and appointed as its executive director Greg Tarpinian, who's made a career of "consulting" for some of the Teamsters' most calcified old guard, it's hard to talk about challenging the status quo with a straight face.

Former AFL-CIO staffer Bill Fletcher notes that the entire debate misses the point: "Our unions suffer from a profound conservatism, a failure to recognize the kinds of changes that are going on... We have to be prepared to talk about something we've been afraid to say out loud – that capitalism is harmful to the health of workers. Something is fundamentally wrong with the priorities of this society, and we have to be courageous enough to say so."

Meanwhile, the business unions continue their collapse. Less than 8 percent of private sector workers are now unionized, and it seems unlikely that the UFCW's brand of minimum-wage unionism is going to inspire many workers to risk their jobs by unionizing. Neither side in this heated debate called for more internal democracy (something notoriously absent from the unions that dominate the Coalition), or offered any vision of how a just society should be organized. There was only the faintest hint of recognition of the need for international solidarity to confront an increasingly global economy.

There was a lot of talk about more independence from the Democrats on all sides, but the only concrete difference between the Coalition "reformers" and the AFL-CIO is that the "reformers" are giving more of their money to Republicans. Direct action and solidarity were not on the agenda, and for all the talk of the need to reform labor laws neither side appears to have given any thought to how to build a union movement that helps workers to organize on the job and defend their interests without the official recognition that is increasingly hard to get.

In short, it's business as usual at an AFL-CIO now much smaller than it was a month ago, while the Coalition unions are moving to launch a competing federation that, if anything, looks to be more boss-friendly than the one they have left.

The merger of the Congress of Industrial Organizations into the American Federation of Labor fifty years ago marked the end of an experiment in which business unions tried to adapt the tools forged by the IWW. In the process, they built unions in many sectors that were generally undemocratic but did deliver better wages and benefits in exchange for channeling workers' rebellion into safer (for the bosses) channels. With the merger, those unions that refused to surrender the vestiges of a broader social vision were left in the cold, and most soon collapsed or were absorbed into the business unions.

So workers have little reason to mourn today's split. But neither is there cause for celebration. Neither side in this bureaucratic struggle has anything to say to workers struggling to revive the labor movement.

AFL-CIO backs "rapid" withdrawal of U.S. troops

Eighteen AFL-CIO state federations and central labor councils submitted resolutions calling for an immediate or rapid end to the occupation of Iraq. But as the convention began, AFL-CIO officials tried to substitute a resolution that called for ending the occupation "as soon as possible" – the same position put forward by the Bush administration.

Delegates organized for a floor fight, and AFL-CIO officials backed down. Fred Mason, co-convenor of U.S. Labor Against the War, offered a "friendly" amendment calling on the government to "rapidly" bring U.S. troops home from Iraq. The modified resolution (which also supports the right of Iraqi workers to organize and calls for cancellation of Iraq's debt, but absurdly claims "The AFL-CIO has a proud history of solidarity with worker movements around the world") was adopted by an overwhelming majority.

This is the first time the AFL-CIO has come out in opposition to a U.S. war.

Labor councils' rebellion

The AFL-CIO has backed down on orders to state and local labor councils to expel locals of the seceding unions. Sweeney acted in response to a growing rebellion from councils that would have been crippled by the expulsion order. Some suggested they might become independent rather than expel unions that, in many places, form the backbone of local labor councils.

Instead, the AFL is creating "solidarity charters" under which independent unions will be allowed to join labor councils if they pay a 10 percent "solidarity" surcharge. However, their members could not be elected to top office. It is unclear whether this compromise will be sufficient to quell the rebellion.

New labor federation forming

Three unions that withdrew from the AFL-CIO have announced plans to launch a new labor federation Sept. 27 in Cincinnati. The SEIU, Teamsters, and United Food and Commercial Workers are expected to participate. The Carpenters, which withdrew from the AFL-CIO in 2001, may also attend.

Three other Change to Win Coalition unions – the Farm Workers, Laborers, and Unite Here – remain in the AFL-CIO. Unite Here has been a leading Coalition member but is unlikely to quit the Federation, if only because its Amalgamated Bank relies heavily on union deposits and could be bankrupted if AFL unions withdrew their funds. The Communications Workers pulled $60 million earlier this year as a warning shot.

Free speech for workers

BY NATHAN NEWMAN

In Florida, a federal district judge issued an injunction barring future protests after the Sheet Metal Workers held a mock funeral procession carrying a coffin back and forth on a public sidewalk in front of a hospital, as members handed out leaflets discussing recent deaths at the institution. The union was protesting the hospital's use of non-union construction workers.

The protest was orderly, as the judge concedes: "The mock funeral procession was orderly. Traffic was not blocked and pedestrians were not obstructed. The individuals handing out leaflets were orderly and did not interfere or impede with the egress or ingress of any individuals to or from the hospital."

Nonetheless, an appeals court upheld the order, saying it was illegal for the union to try pressure the hospital to stop doing business with non-union contractors. The courts call this a secondary boycott, and while unions are allowed to protest the business practices of non-union contractors they can't mount a public protest against the use of those contractors. Since construction firms only work at other business premises, this means there is no place where the union can effectively mount a protest.

The Supreme Court has ruled that unions can send one or two people to distribute leaflets, but that's it – and it's not likely to be too effective. And if workers at the hospital refused (or were even asked to refuse) to work in solidarity with the construction workers, that too would be illegal.

You occasionally hear folks say that unions face less repression than back in the "old days," meaning the 1930s, which is just plain ignorant. Labor law back then didn't have these kinds of anti-speech provisions. They were added after World War II in the Taft-Hartley Act and follow-up legislation.

If all those libertarian-minded liberals out there want a new cause, how about liberty for union protesters? *www.nathannewman.org*

Selective lock-out

Since the beginning of May, 25 members of UAW Local 174 in Livonia, Michigan, have been victims of a selective lock-out.

The Hercules steel plant locked out 25 of 72 union workers after the union's contract expired, hiring scabs to replace them.

The Hercules plant is the only one of Eaton Steel's three facilities with a union. In negotiations, company officials tried to ram through a contract that would eliminate seniority rights and allow the company to fire employees without a review process.

More than half the union workers called in to work during the lock-out are honoring the picket line; the others are engaged in a new variation on union scabbing.

Black workers fight Tyson

Black workers at the Ashland, Ala., plant of Tyson Foods have complained to the EEOC about a "whites only" sign posted on the workers' bathroom. Both were suspended in the alleged retaliatory move by the company. Restrooms were locked and keys were given to whites only. Tyson managers said the restroom was being remodeled.

U Cal nurses blocked from striking, New Jersey nurses in 15th month

University of California nurses, held back from striking by a court injunction since July 20, were in court August 12 to ask the Superior Court to remove its temporary restraining order against the planned one-day strike. However, the hearing was postponed until August 25 at the state's request.

State officials maintain the California Nurses Association-organized strike against UC is illegal because the University has not formally ended contract talks that stopped July 8 when the University refused to budge from its "final" offer. But CNA officers, who represent 9,000 nurses at six state universities, say the University of California repeatedly violated state labor law during negotiations, justifying members' decision to strike. Three other unions have held one-day strikes earlier this year against UC.

CNA nurses continued negotiations after rejecting an April 8 contract offer from the state, but withdrew from the talks July 8 when the University refused to budge from its "final offer." The fight with UC bureaucrats involves shop floor issues such as workload, safety and client concerns. Staffing ratio regulations were legislated in 1999 requiring one nurse to every six patients in general medical-surgical wards by 2004, then one to five by 2005.

Gov. Schwarzenegger issued an "emergency" order delaying the 1-to-5 ratio until 2008 to alleviate a so-called nursing shortage, but the courts ruled against him. Schwarzenegger and two appointees now face contempt charges for defying the court order.

UC officials are also refusing to agree to



safety procedures for nurses working with overweight patients, and attempting to reduce pension guarantees.

In New Jersey, 200 striking JNESCO workers recently rallied to "shout out" at hospital managers on the 15th month anniversary of their strike against Lourdes Medical Center in Willingsboro. At issue are work schedules, shift rotations and the hospital's practice of moving nurses specializing in one area into other wards to fill shortages. The union has appealed to the NLRB to resolve unfair labor practices since 2004 and federal mediators are participating in negotiations.

More than 70 percent of the nurses are still on strike, although 90 of the 318 original strikers are now working with replacement scab nurses.

Two tiers at Berkeley Bowl

The UFCW has negotiated a 2-tier contract with the Berkeley Bowl grocery, slashing wages for new hires by $7.50 an hour and requiring part-time workers to put in 23 hours a week before they become eligible for medical benefits.

The deal mirrors concessions made in recent UFCW contracts. Ironically, this is a first contract reached after the independent grocer agreed to recognize the union last year to settle unfair labor practice charges.

Union-busters miss unions

The June 26 *Chicago Tribune* reports that union-busting consultants were looking forward to the split in the AFL-CIO. Business has slowed as union power declined, and union-buster Bill Adams figured the split would lead unions to expand organizing efforts – meaning more business for his ilk.

"If absolutely nothing changes, which is impossible," Adams said, "unions are gone and I'm twisting sailboat lines in the Virgin Islands."

More than two-thirds of employers facing an organizing campaign hire union-busting consultants, which typically charge $3,000 per worker or more for their services.



A class act...

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politicians, and still cling to the idea that capitalism can be a friend of labor?

In my opinion, the leadership of the AFL-CIO has never understood capitalism. They simply trusted that U.S. corporations would remain national in scope and loyal to U.S. workers. That error is costing U.S. working families dearly. The AFL-CIO doesn't have a clue how to defend workers in a rapidly changing global capitalistic economy.

If AFL-CIO restructuring does not address the following three issues, it is time for its funeral:

1. Capitalism as labor's partner. (President of the SEIU's idea, not mine)

2. A return to union democracy. (My idea, not Andy Stern's.) Top-down leadership suffocates any union movement.

3. International class solidarity. We've had enough of a privileged U.S. union movement.

Iraqi unionists speak in Baltimore

Six Iraqi labor leaders spoke in Baltimore in June, as part of a national tour sponsored by U.S. Labor Against War. Although the boss press refused to cover the events, union activists worked to make our Iraqi fellow workers' voices heard.

In Baltimore, Iraqi Federation of Trade Union delegates Adnan al Saffar and Abed Sekhi spoke at the new UNITE-HERE hall, at a talk co-sponsored by the new IWW shop, Red Emma's Bookstore*Coffeehouse.

Adnan al Saffar of the Union of Mechanics, Printing and Metal Workers is an executive member of the ITFU and the editor of *Workers' Unity*. Abed Sekhi is a member of the Agricultural Workers' Union and a former leader of the Ba'athist General Federation of Trade Union who was expelled in 1970.

Both agreed that the occupation forces must work toward full withdrawal of the troops, which they said are more interested in privatizing resource extraction for the benefit of U.S. companies than in providing security to ordinary Iraqis. They also called for repeal of the Hussein regime's anti-labor laws, now being enforced by the occupation regime.

During the question period, a young man stated that he had heard that some members of the Federation's leadership were in the Iraqi Communist Party, which favored the occupation. Abed Sekhi replied that the IFTU's only goal was to organize Iraqi workers, and that the ITFU has no ties with political parties or religious organizations.

Following the event, Adnan and Sekhi attended a reception at Red Emma's before returning to their hotel. Abed Sekhi woke in the middle of the night complaining of headaches and dizziness. He was rushed to the hospital and was admitted to the intensive care unit for a brain aneurysm.

Baltimore Wobblies and other labor activists sent Iraqi newspapers and made daily visits during his hospitalization. Fortunately, USLAW had purchased an international health insurance plan for the Iraqi delegates.

Abed spent close to a month in the ICU. When he was released his passport and other documents had been stolen from the security locker at the hospital. The Iraqi embassy said it would take two months before the passport could be replaced; however a delegation from the Agricultural Workers' Union approached the Iraqi Foreign Minister and Abed had his passport in hand the next day.

Workers lose more ground

U.S. workers continue to lose ground, as inflation outpaces wage gains. In July, hourly wages rose 0.4 percent, while inflation rose 0.5%. Over the past year, inflation-adjusted earnings fell by 0.5%. As a result, real wages are now slightly lower than when the economic "recovery" began in November 2001. Productivity is up 12 percent since then.

Fight for shorter Hours



Overtime increases risk of illness

Spending too many hours on the job significantly increases chances of serious injury and risk, according to a new study in *Occupational and Environmental Health*.

Those working 12-hour days faced a 37 percent higher risk than those working less, according to researchers at the University of Massachusetts medical school who studied work records from nearly 11,000 American workers.

The researchers found that more than half of all work injuries occurred on jobs with long shifts or extensive overtime.

66-hour weeks for truckers

The Bush administration has reissued regulations allowing trucking companies to require truckers to spend six days a week on the road and to drive for 11 hours at a time, flouting a federal court ruling throwing out an earlier attempt to impose the changes as "arbitrary and capricious" and dangerous.

Drivers will be required to take at least 10 hours off between shifts, and are not allowed to work more than 14 hours a day (the 11-hour limit applies only to driving time). Short-haul drivers could be worked 16-hour days twice a week, an increase lobbied for by Wal-Mart and other retailers.

The Teamsters union and safety groups condemned the changes, which will take effect Oct. 1 unless they are blocked, saying drivers need shorter, not longer, hours.

"Wasting" time

Papers that rarely run labor news found space last month to report that U.S. workers are a bunch of slackers. A survey by Salary.com and America Online claims the average worker "wastes" about 2 hours a day at work surfing the Internet, socializing with co-workers, thinking, making personal phone calls and running errands.

The survey did not examine how much time was wasted by nitpicking supervisors, useless paperwork, proliferating bureaucracy, or the need to support an increasingly expensive boss class.

Workers told surveyors they "wasted" time because they didn't have enough work, were underpaid, or worked such long hours that they could not perform personal tasks in off-work hours. Why time spent talking to co-workers, thinking or attending to personal matters is "wasted" was not explained by the researchers.

French Family Values

Although workers' hourly productivity is higher in France, U.S. workers produce more each year, economist Paul Krugman writes in the July 29 *New York Times*. The reason is simple, they put a lot less time in at work (between a shorter work week, longer vacations and earlier retirement), and a lot more time living their lives.

The typical working-class French family has less disposable income, Krugman says, which "translates into lower personal consumption: a smaller car, a smaller house, less eating out.

"But there are compensations... Because French schools are good across the country, the French family doesn't have to worry as much about getting its children into a good school district. Nor does the French family, with guaranteed access to excellent health care, have to worry about losing health insurance or being driven into bankruptcy by medical bills.

"Perhaps even more important, however, the members of that French family are compensated for their lower income with much more time together. Fully employed French workers average about seven weeks of paid vacation a year. In America, that figure is less than four."

He cites a new study by Harvard and Dartmouth researchers who conclude that Europeans work less than Americans, on average, not because of cultural differences but because labor regulations and strong unions give workers the power to insist on time off and vacations. And as a result, surveys indicate, they're happier than their overworked American counterparts.

McDonald's time-shaving

McDonald's will reimburse tens of thousands of Japanese workers short-changed by time clocks that calculated workers' pay based on 30-minute intervals rounded down to the nearest half-hour.

The government acted after a union worker complained. McDonald's may have to pay as much as 2 billion yen.

Airline workers...

continued from page 1

within minutes. Workers on leave were fired by letter. As word of the firings spread to nearby Heathrow airport, baggage handlers and other ground crew walked out in solidarity, shutting down nearly all BA flights. Work resumed the next day after Transport & General union officials ordered workers to halt what they said was an illegal strike and trust to negotiations to resolve the dispute.

Gate Gourmet has been steadily increasing workloads even as it lays off workers and demands deep concessions. The number of flights workers are required to service has nearly doubled, and the company has proposed to eliminate premiums for overtime work and slash paid sick days from 25 days a year to five. The union had agreed to the elimination of 400 jobs, but workers rejected the proposed contract in June.

Many of the workers had previously worked directly for British Airways, which sold its food service operations to Swissair in 1997. Gate Gourmet now employs 22,000 people in 29 countries, and makes more than half a million airline meals a day. Texas Pacific Group bought the company in December 2002; it set up the temporary labor agency which is supplying scabs eight months ago. A spokesman said Versa Logistics was organized "because for many months there has been the threat of official action. It is good management sense to have a company so if a situation flares up you can keep the product lines running."

Texas Pacific was founded by David Bonderman, who spent $10 million on his 60th birthday party in 2002, hiring the Rolling Stones and film star Robin Williams to entertain 300 friends in Las Vegas. Texas Pacific specializes in buying failing companies, slashing costs, and reselling them. The company took 10 years to restructure Continental Airlines, before selling the airline for 11 times what it had invested. Since the strike, the *Daily Mirror* has published documents showing that a year ago, Gate Gourmet management drew up plans to provoke Heathrow workers into striking illegally, so they could be replaced by lower-wage non-union workers.

Gate Gourmet has replaced the mostly Asian immigrant workers with East European immigrants. In union negotiations Gate Gourmet has said it is only willing to reinstate workers who were out sick or on leave at the time of the job action. British Airways has threatened to discipline workers who initiated or joined the strike; Transport & General officials have warned that any victimization would lead to new strike action.

British Airways' contract with Gate Gourmet expires next year, and is unlikely to be renewed. However, its major competitor, Sky Chef, is also engaged in brutal cost-cutting as airlines squeeze their subcontractors.

Gate Gourmet is also trying to cut average pay and slash holiday, pension and health care benefits in the United States, where workers are represented by Unite Here and the Teamsters. This summer, unions representing Gate Gourmet employees successfully sued to reinstate health benefits after the company tried to unilaterally eliminate them.

Airline workers are under attack around the world, as skyrocketing fuel prices, increased security costs, economic recession and the growth of largely non-union discount carriers have squeezed the bottom line. Unions have responded to this global, industry-wide assault with antiquated tactics better suited to the days of horse-and-buggy transport than to modern global industry.

At Northwest, flight attendants, ground crews and pilots are also fighting demands for concessions, but rather than stand together to bring real power to bear the unions have been negotiating individually, and pledging to stab each other in the back. (To its credit, AMFA did announce that it would honor other unions' picket lines, but did not attempt to build a cross-union rank-and-file struggle against the concessions demands.)

"It's a slap in the face," said Janice Walker, an aircraft cleaner for Northwest. "Unions are supposed to stick together. How can they just cross over a picket line like that?"

Workers at other U.S. airlines have relied on union-by-union negotiations conducted under the threat of bankruptcy filings or new terms unilaterally imposed by judges, trying less to hold back the concessions tide than to slow it a bit and divert the carnage onto other airline workers.

Workers have given back hundreds of millions of dollars, only to see the bosses come back and demand more. We saw a similar round of concessions in the 1980s, until airline workers finally began to fight back. Then, as now, those struggles were undermined by a craft unionism that divides workers into several competing unions, each with its own contract and working conditions. Even within the same craft and the same company, unions have agreed to contracts which pay workers on "regional" routes (a term that applies more to the size of the airplane being flown than to the distance) only a fraction of base pay. This jigsaw-puzzle unionism has divided airline workers into hundreds of competing units represented by unions which would as soon scab on their fellow workers as win.

Nor is this condition unique to the United States. In England, the Transport & General union, which represents the locked-out food workers and the British Airways ground crews tried to negotiate a contract that would have surrendered hundreds of jobs. Faced with a situation where rank-and-file industrial action was shutting down BA's global network, union officials scrambled not to get Gate Gourmet workers back on the job, but instead to get British Airways planes back in the air – squandering their enormous industrial power and betraying hundreds of workers whose reinstatement was within grasp.

This is the inevitable result of a "unionism" committed to industrial peace, to negotiating and enforcing contracts with the employers rather than fighting the day-to-day class war on the job, to experts "representing" workers mis-organized by job classification rather than along industrial lines. It was obsolete 100 years ago, when the IWW was founded and airplanes were struggling to get off the ground. The answer is as modern as the IWW itself: industrial solidarity, direct action that proceeds from the recognition that "An injury to one is an injury to all."

Vancouver port strike ending

Traffic began to move out of jammed British Columbia ports August 3, after several trucking companies agreed to a one-year deal proposed by a federal mediator. Some 1,000 members of the Vancouver Container Truck Association struck in late June, demanding higher rates for hauling cargo in order to compensate for skyrocketing fuel costs.

Employers had earlier unanimously rejected the proposal – modeled after their proposals during bargaining – instead urging the government to order striking truckers back to work. When the government did not act, several firms broke ranks.

The mediator's proposal sets minimum pay for any call out at C$200, with a $50 surcharge for hauling dangerous goods. The proposal also provides for automatic rate increases tied to fuel prices.

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IWW recyclers near agreement

BY KYLE GLEASON, BAY AREA GMB

The IWW entered its ninth week of negotiations August 27 with Community Conservation Centers, or "Buy Back," a recycling company based in Berkeley, California.

The IWW bargaining unit consists of 22 workers, and bargaining has been conducted in open sessions in which all employees are allowed to attend negotiations and talk freely. Each week about a dozen workers have attended bargaining sessions.

The three main issues for the "Buy Back" workers have been wages, health care and holidays. At the beginning of the contract campaign, workers collectively presented a petition with their contract demands to their boss, Jeff Belchamber. Wages, health care and holidays were settled on the 27th and negotiations should be concluded soon.

The starting wage at "Buy Back" is being raised to $11.05 in accordance with the latest City of Berkeley Living Wage Ordinance; workers will average an immediate raise of $1.03, with 50-cent raises for every subsequent year. The starting wage at Community Conservation Centers was $8/hour before the shop was unionized in 2001, a wage still common in non-union recycling shops.

The union accepted the creation of a fourth job classification in a compromise to gain significant wage raises. Unfortunately, the new classification further orients wages toward skill level rather than seniority and will cause the lowest classification workers to reach their wage cap more quickly.

The health care co-pay was cut in half from $30 to $15 per doctor's visit, a significant difference especially for workers with families or health problems.

However, management revealed yet again its disrespect for culturally relevant holidays. The IWW demanded recognition of Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Cinco de Mayo as paid holidays. In the past "Buy Back" workers have taken direct action to gain acknowledgement of MLK Day and Cinco de Mayo.

On Martin Luther King Jr. Day this year African-American workers walked off the job and their Latino fellow workers covered for them. The previous year there had been a similar show of solidarity when the African-American workers covered for Latino workers who decided not to work on Cinco de Mayo.

During a heated moment in the bargaining session August 27, a red-faced Jeff Belchamber tried to strip workers of Malcolm X Day, Cesar Chavez Day, and Indigenous People's Day. "All the brown holidays," as Fellow Worker Harjit Gill noted. The struggle for full respect and acknowledgement of culturally significant holidays continues.

In the end, workers decided to compromise on the holiday demands in exchange for gains in wages and health benefits. Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Cinco de Mayo were not won in full, but will be recognized as holidays for which employees will be paid a full day's work if the company allows the crew to leave work early. In the new contract there will be eight such holidays recognized in this manner in addition to six recognized paid holidays and three floating holidays.

Only a few issues remain to be negotiated, including the union's demand for retroactive pay according to the new contract's wage scale for the period that has passed since the expiration of the contract.

Located in the same industrial yard as Community Conservation Centers is another IWW-represented union shop: the Ecology Center, a curbside recycling company.

Ecology Center workers have been holding bargaining committee meetings and will enter contract negotiations within the next few months.

The union is looking forward to running a joint bargaining campaign in 2007 when negotiations will hopefully be aligned. Through solidarity, workers at the two companies will be able to amass greater collective strength in their common industry and force greater concessions from the bosses.



Pizza Time strike continues

Olympia Pizza Time has reopened under new ownership, which is refusing to meet with striking workers. The strike is now in its sixth month, and picket lines went back up as soon as the shop reopened.

IWW exhibit in Ann Arbor

The University of Michigan's Labadie Collection of Social Protest is presenting "Soapboxers and Saboteurs: 100 Years of Wobbly Solidarity," an exhibit from one of the world's best collections of materials documenting early IWW history, Sept. 6 through November 26. The exhibit on the 7th floor of the Harlan Hatcher Library on U-M's Central Campus, includes original letters, posters, photographs, sheet music and memorabilia.

U-M's IWW Centennial celebration includes a free concert October 19 featuring labor singer Anne Feeney and a talk by Joyce Kornbluh, author of Rebel Voices: An IWW Anthology. A discussion of current and past IWW labor struggles will follow.

Hours for the exhibit are M-F 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. and 10 until noon on Saturdays.

Auto workers join rush hour Detroit rally for green cars

Beneath banners reading "Green cars not gas guzzlers" and "Oil is over; drive the future," a Ford Rouge River plant representative from United Auto Workers Local 600 accepted a "key to the future" August 22 during a rush-hour rally at the factory that first mass-produced the original Model-T, a car that got better gas mileage 80 years ago than any Big Three fleet gets on average today.

A second key was delivered to the office of vice president Dick Cheney, a driving force behind the new U.S. energy policy that gives auto makers a free ride on fuel efficiency.

"We know the future lies in hybrid vehicles," said Jerry Sullivan, president of United Autoworkers Local 600.

On September 2, 2004, Niel Golightly, director of environmental strategies for Ford Motor Company, told *USA Today*, "Clearly, the entire industry could build nothing but zero emissions cars today if it wanted to."

Detroit Free Press falls

Years after joining with Gannett to crush the Detroit newspaper strikers, Knight-Ridder is pulling out, saying profits have not recovered and Gannett is too difficult to work with. Gannett will buy the *Free Press* (and sell its failing *Detroit News* to MediaNews Group) for $262 million. The chains are also swapping papers in Florida, Idaho and Washington.

Although the *Free Press* now dominates circulation as a result of lingering hostility toward Gannett for its role in the strike (as well as ruthless cost-cutting that has gutted the paper), under the terms of their Joint Operating Agreement Gannett controlled the Detroit Newspaper Agency which handles the business end of the two papers.

Global justice demonstration

Anti-war, global justice and other activists will rally in Washington D.C. September 23-26 to protest the Bush Administration and its corporate cronies holding annual meetings for the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

Details, a ride board, and other resources are available at www.SeptemberAction.org.

Edmonton Wobs launch newsletter

The Edmonton, Alberta, General Membership Branch has begun a new newsletter, *The Wobbly Dispatch*. The March issue reports on their campaign against the Christian Labour Association of Canada. CLAC plans to bring in foreign workers for oil projects, under sweetheart deals that undermine union rates and hard-won working conditions.

That issue also responds to "Family Day" in Alberta, advocating an increased minimum wage, affordable and accessible day care, affordable school tuition, social assistance supports and an end to discrimination against families that include same-sex partners. An open letter asks unionists to look beyond contracts to build a workers' movement based on "solidarity, with which we could be more powerful than a thousand governments with a million laws to keep us down."

And there is a review of Elaine Briere's documentary film, "Betrayed: The Story of Canada's Merchant Seamen." The review recounts the story of young Canadian men who worked on merchant ships during World War II, delivering supplies to ports around the world in the fight against fascism. They formed the Canadian Seaman's Union, struggling for better conditions during the war and after. The CSU was smashed by the government, a scab union imported from the U.S., and red-baiting, and many sailors lost their jobs.

The second issue of this attractive newsletter, published in July, reports on May Day events (including several photos), and features an appeal to young workers urging them to organize for better conditions.

Also of interest is a report on efforts to organize farm workers in Alberta, a review of Peter Kropotkin's book, *Anarchist Morality*, and David Condon's report on his visit to Cuba, where he met with fellow anti-FTAA activists from throughout Latin America and visited a school, medical facility and a bio-reserve outside Havana.

Copies can be downloaded in pdf format at http://edmonton.iww.ca.

Miami port truckers protest

Hundreds of truck cabs streamed down South Florida freeways August 11 in a convoy demanding higher payments to compensate for skyrocketing fuel costs,

The caravan was organized by the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and the International Longshoremen's Association, which are urging Congress to pass a mandatory fuel surcharge law that would automatically pay truckers more as diesel prices rise.

"¡No Mas! [No More]" said posters showing a gasoline nozzle stabbing drivers in the back plastered on the cabs of several hundred semis.

The largely immigrant drivers are paid by the load to haul containers to and from the Port of Miami-Dade. The "independent contractors" work for trucking companies that contract with shippers to haul their cargo.

Youngstown news strike ends

Days after the *Youngstown Vindicator* threatened to replace striking workers, 150 Newspaper Guild editorial and circulation workers accepted a slightly improved contract offer and returned to work in early August. They had been on strike since Nov. 16, undercut by union scabbing by printers and drivers (both members of the Teamsters union) and by well-paid scab journalists sent to Ohio by other publishers (scabs were paid two salaries: one from the publisher who sent them, the other by the *Vindicator*).

Newsies demand more pay

Carriers who deliver the Louisville, Kentucky, *Courier-Journal* as "independent contractors" are demanding a pay hike to compensate for higher fuel costs. The carriers are paid 7 cents per paper; management said they could ask customers for tips or quit.

1905-2005: Celebrating a Century of Revolutionary Industrial Unionism

Ann Arbor, Mich.: "Soapboxers and Saboteurs: 100 Years of Wobbly Solidarity." Exhibit commemorating 100 years of the IWW with materials from the Labadie Collection. Sept. 6 - Nov. 23; University of Michigan Special Collections Library. October 19: Reception featuring labor singer Anne Feeney.

Kansas City, MO: Conference on Radical Economics and the Labor Movement. Sept. 15-17, To register or for accommodations information and updated program: http://cas.umkc.edu/econ/iwwconf/

Pittsburgh: 100 Years of Educating, Agitating & Organizing. Centennial celebration featuring IWW art, songs, speakers and literature. Saturday, Oct. 22, 1:30 - 8:30 p.m., The Pump House (site of 1892 Homestead Massacre), Waterfront Drive.

Philadelphia: *Wobblies!* book/art exhibit, Oct. 15 - 30, Robin's Bookstore. Presentation by editor Nicole Shulman and IWW General Secretary-Treasurer Alexis Buss Oct. 19 at 7 p.m.

Detroit Mich.: North American Labor History Conference, focusing on the IWW's first 100 years. An exhibit commemorating the IWW centenary and exhibiting artifacts from the IWW archives will open in conjunction with the conference. Oct. 21-23, Wayne State University.

Lakewood, NJ: "Workers/Draftees of the World Unite!" a multimedia presentation on IWW artist, columnist and draft resister Carlos Cortez (1923-2004) by historian Scott Bennett. Tuesday, Nov. 8, 7 p.m., Little Theater, Georgian Court University. Reservations requested.

A new edition of our official history, The IWW: Its First 100 Years, *and the 2006 IWW Calendar are scheduled for release in October. A timeline of IWW history and other centenary materials can be found at www.iww.org/projects/centenary.*

Radical Economics & the Labor Movement

A Conference Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the Founding of the Industrial Workers of the World

September 15-17, 2005
University of Missouri-Kansas City, USA

The conference theme is the role of radical economics in the labor movement in the United States and around the world. Radical economics includes but is not restricted to anarchism, Marxism, syndicalism, and left-wing Keynesianism.

Topics covered will include syndicalism past and present, education, radical economics and democracy, industrial relations, the economics of the IWW, and Sraffa and organized labor.

Come participate in a conference that occurs only once every 100 years! Registration and ichedule information can be obtained at http://cas.umkc.edu/econ/iwwconf/.

The Conference is co-sponsored by the IWW and the UMKC Economics Dept. and supported by the Union for Radical Political Economics.

BOOKS FOR REBELLIOUS WORKERS



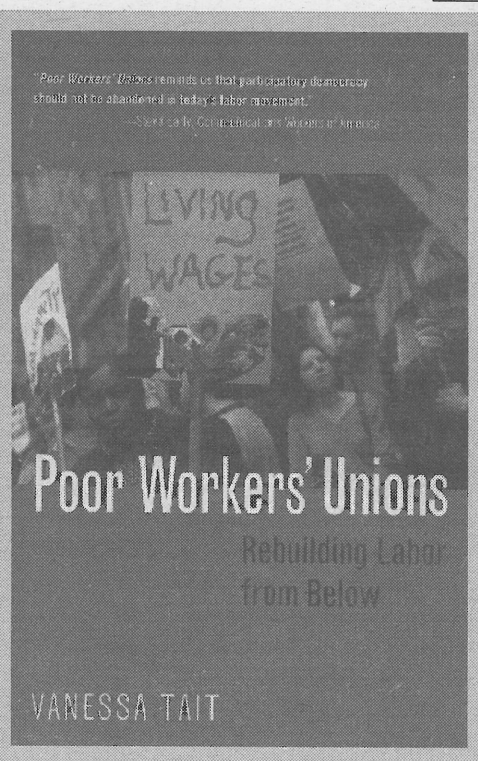
Wobblies! A Graphic History Edited by Paul Buhle and Nicole Schulman

The stories of the hard-rock miners' shooting wars, young Elizabeth Gurly Flynn (the "Rebel Girl" of contemporary sheet music), the first -sit-down strikes and Free Speech fights, the Pageant for Paterson orchestrated in Madison Square Garden, bohemian radicals John Reed and Louise Bryant, field-hand revolts and lumber workers' strikes, wartime witch hunts, government prosecutions and mob lynching, Mexican-American uprisings in Baja, and Mexican peasant revolts led by Wobblies, hilarious and sentimental songs created and later revived—all are here, and much, much more.

The IWW, which has been organizing workers since 1905, is often cited yet elusive to scholars because of its eclectic and controversial cultural and social character. *Wobblies!* presents the IWW whole, scripted and drawn by old-time and younger Wobbly and IWW-inspired artists.

"Tell the bosses to go to hell and buy an extra copy of this wonderful history. Give it to an exploited friend or just leave it in a public place. On the centenary of the IWW, we should be replanting the seeds of rebellion."

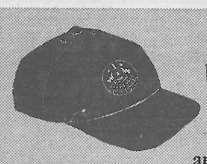
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Poor Workers' Unions: Rebuilding Labor from Below by Vanessa Tait

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Workfare laborers.
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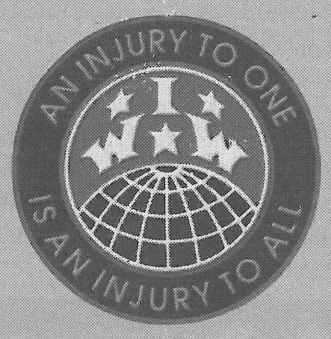
Punching Out & Other Writings by Martin Glaberman, edited & introduced by Staughton Lynd
A collection of writings by autoworker, historian and poet Marty Glaberman. This collection reprints Glaberman's classic writings on the union movement, Marxism, the challenges facing radical movements in the 1970s and 1980s, the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, and a selection of labor poetry. Among the gems to be found are Egghead comics, an appreciation of C.L.R. James, and of course a reprint of the classic pamphlet on business unionism, Punching Out. Glaberman celebrated the possibilities of informal work groups both to resist capitalism and to run industry once we've dumped the bosses off our backs. 231 pages, **$14.00**

Green Bans, Red Union, Environmental Activism and the New South Wales Builders Labourers' Federation
by Meredith and Verity Burgmann
At the height of the Australian building industry boom in the 1970s a remarkable union campaign stopped billions of dollars worth of indiscriminate development that was turning Australian cities into concrete jungles. Enraging employers and politicians but delighting many in the wider community, the members of the New South Wales Builders Labourers' Federation risked their jobs in order to preserve buildings, bush and parkland. The direct impact of this "green bans" movement can be seen all over Sydney. *Green Bans, Red Union* documents the development of a union that took direct action on a number of social issues. Apart from the green bans movement, union members also used their industrial power to support the rights of oppressed groups, such as Aborigines, women and homosexuals. In telling the colorful story that inspired many environmentalists and ordinary citizens, Meredith and Verity Burgmann open a window on a period when Australian workers led the world in innovative and stunningly effective forms of environmental protest.
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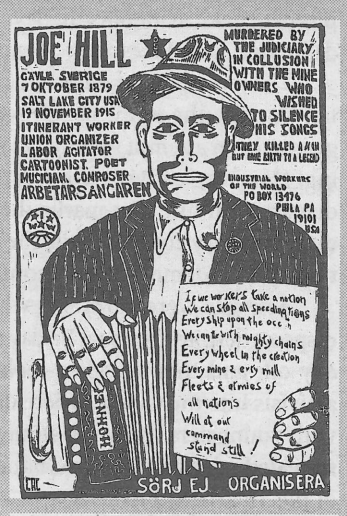
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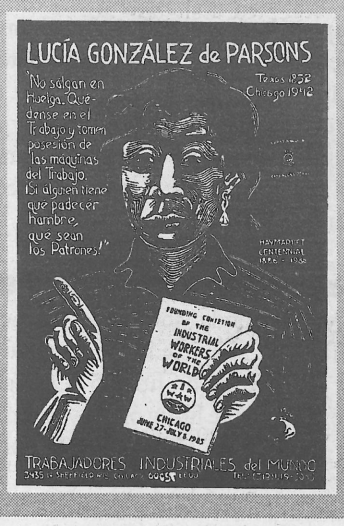
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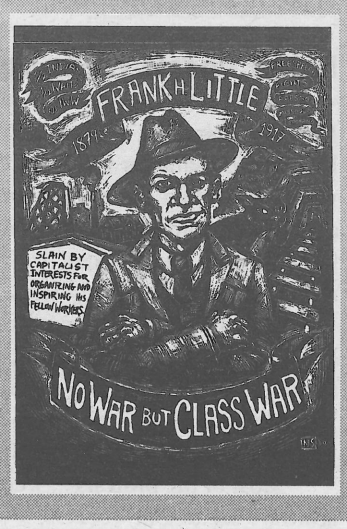
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2005 World Series workers' meeting

BY KENNETH MILLER

This year's Cultures of Solidarity Workers' Meeting in Ft Wayne, Indiana, included workers from Thailand, Swaziland, Poland and the Philippines. The meeting was one week after the AFL-CIO convention and many participants arrived from there.

Garment industry workers in Free Trade Zones in Swaziland recently won the largest garment industry contract in the world, covering nearly 20,000 workers. Organizers credit a threatened boycott of Wal-Mart products as a key factor in their negotiations. Workers in Thailand seem to be counting on the same type of pressure coming to bear.

Talking with Mexican worker representatives exacerbated my concern that little is being done to explain college codes of conduct and licensing agreements to workers. The fact that the copyrighted logos are a direct link to communities throughout North America is repeatedly lost. Instead, we have attached workers rights to intellectual property laws.

Stan Gasek of the AFL-CIO International Relations Dept. emphasized that the AFL-CIO Solidarity Centers can not take policy positions against the Bush administration because they are funded by our tax dollars.

The All Star 2006 baseball game will be in Pittsburgh, and this is an important opportunity for escalating SweatFree Baseball initiatives. There is no better opportunity to organize a global union than in the apparel sector in coming months and years.

A freeze on factory locations (to prevent contractors from fleeing unions or playing workers off against even more desperate workers) and full wage disclosure can be won by solidarity activists in North America and will create real opportunities and protections workers can use to organize. Sweatshop Activists must continue to focus on the big picture of change in this industry and the expiration of the Multi Fiber Arrangement.



PHOTO: TOMASZ LASKOWSKI

Kenneth Miller (L), Pittsburgh Anti-Sweatshop Community Alliance; Somsak Kosaisuk, Thailand State Enterprise Workers Relations Federation; Martha Piper, restaurant worker, Ft. Wayne Workers Project; Jan Sithole, SSTU Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions; Malgorzata Franczyk, Poland Solidarnosc NSZZ; Ezequeil Garcia (R), Frente Authentico Del Trabajo.

SweatFree Baseballers are urged to use the first game of the 2005 World Series to meet and talk about workers in the apparel industry, the logos that represent your community and how licensing agreements can protect workers rights.

Contact Greg Georgio of the IWW-ISC for an organizing packet and check the IWW website as the first game of the 2005 World Series approaches in mid-October. For more about the Ft Wayne 2005 workers' meetings: www.ircni.org/cultures_of_solidarity.htm

Walking with, not on

BY DAVID COCCAGNA

Jakarta, Indonesia, recently experienced riots and demonstrations from laborers at Nike factories who demanded that Nike pay the national minimum wage of $2.50 a day. As of now, Nike only pays $1.60 a day to their workers. Other factories in the area have made some steps to improve conditions, such as Reebok and Goodyear. Everyone seems to have a better idea of how to treat the laborers of Jakarta except Nike.

In Jakarta, the Confederation of Indonesian Employees Unions, Textile, Clothing and Leather (SPSI-TSK) represents workers who produce for the shoe company No Sweat. This brand makes a shoe quite similar to the Nike-owned Converse Chuck Taylor, but there is an enormous difference in the treatment of their workers. For instance, where Nike pays $33 a month in wages to their laborers, No Sweat pays workers $90 a month, not to mention full health benefits for themselves, partial benefits for family, and a rice allowance (a staple of the Indonesian diet).

Some may ask, would union-made shoes be more expensive? The fact is, Nike gouges consumers and workers viciously. To make a pair of $70 Nike sneakers, it costs about $2.75. The shoes made by No Sweat were actually less expensive until recently when the company raised prices to deal with the troubles that came along with the tsunami. Now the price of No Sweat sneakers is the same as that of Converse Chuck Taylors.

So, as union sympathizers, laborers and rebellious thinkers, it is time that we begin to walk with our fellow workers, not on them.

Rally against Coca-Cola in India

BY INDIA RESOURCE CENTER

More than 1,500 people rallied against a proposed Coca-Cola bottling plant in Gangaikondan village in southern India August 9. Water is scarce in the region, and a broad-based movement has emerged to stop the Coca-Cola plant – insisting that it will further exacerbate water scarcity in the area.

"We are demanding that Coca-Cola quit India," said T. Fatimson of the Campaign for Right to Livelihood and Food Security. The rally coincided with the anniversary of the "Quit India" movement, initiated by Mahatma Gandhi in 1942 demanding an immediate end to British colonial rule.

Coca-Cola's operations in India have come under intense scrutiny as many communities are experiencing severe water shortages as well as contaminated groundwater and soil, directly as a result of Coca-Cola's bottling operations.

A delegation from Plachimada was at the rally; the Plachimada plant, one of Coca-Cola's largest bottling facilities in India, has been shut down for seventeen months because the village council refuses to renew its license, citing the company for causing water shortages and pollution.

Solidarity with Asarco copper workers

Thousands of Mexican mining and steel workers launched one-hour strikes August 15 in solidarity with striking copper workers at Asarco mines in Arizona and Texas and steel workers at the Sicartsa mill in Mexico's central Michoacan state.

Some 1,500 workers at Asarco, a unit of mining giant Grupo Mexico, began a strike July 2 at six U.S. plants after a year of fruitless negotiations. The union agreed to cuts in workers' health-care plan, but Asarco insisted on freezing wages and slashing health care and retirement benefits.

Rather than negotiate, Grupo Mexico took Asarco into bankruptcy even as world copper prices soared to record levels. The United Steelworkers of America says Grupo Mexico has systematically stripped the firm of its assets since buying Asarco in 1999.

"It's no secret what's happening here," said USW District 12 Director Terry Bonds. "The robber barons running Grupo Mexico set the stage for this by stripping Asarco of its profitable Peruvian assets in 2003. They believe that it will be cheaper to bankrupt Asarco than it would be to meet Asarco's tremendous environmental, asbestos and retiree obligations."

The Labour Ministry outlawed the strike against Grupo Villacero Sicartsa steel mill, reinforcing the STMMRM union's determination to hold solidarity strikes that involved some 250,000 workers.

The government says the union began its strike one-half hour early, among other minor points, and said workers could be fired if they did not return to work. The strikers are demanding reinstatement of fired union activists, resolution of several grievances, and the right of 300 workers at a unit in Nuevo Leon state to join the same union.

The Mexican Workers' Confederation has selected Joaquin Gamboa secretary-general, after the incumbent died. Gamboa, 78, pledged to maintain a reasonable and moderate stance toward employers: "There is this old idea that labor and business should get in fights, and that's not really the case."

World Labor Solidarity

A COLUMN BY THE INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY COMMISSION

Guatemala: death threats

Eight leaders of the Sindicato de Trabajadores del Credito Hipotecario Nacional (STCHN) have received death threats they believe are connected to a long-standing industrial dispute. Early in the morning of July 25, a funeral wreath was found hanging on a window at the offices of UNSITRAGUA, to which STCHN is affiliated.

Two death notices were also found by the door. The first said (in Spanish) "What a pity to lose pseudo-leaders sons of a bitches" and it went on to list eight workers: Luis Ernesto Morales Galvez, Edgar Vinicio Ordonez Garcia, Luis Fernando Sirin Aroche, Efrain Lopez Uiche, Jose Douglas Asencio, Elio Santiago Monroy Lopez, Danilo Enrique Chea Herrera, and Manuel Francisco Arias Virula.

The second death notice said "Pieces of shit, scum, sons of a bitches, goodbye, goodbye" and "2005 unforgettable year of the destruction of a belligerent trade union."

The threats have their origins in a dispute which began in 2002 when 170 members of STCHN were forced to take "voluntary redundancy" following the announcement of the privatisation of the Credito Hipotecario Nacional bank. The union has been fighting privatization, but 240 workers have been forced to quit and authorities have threatened to strip the union of its legal status.

On July 22, as union members met a representative of the Public Prosecutor's Office to record complaints of management harassment, a senior manager insulted and threatened them, saying that "From here on things will change."

In 2004 there were 122 attacks against human rights defenders, journalists, justice officials, unionists, religious officials, community leaders and others. Thus far there have been 130 cases in 2005.

Banana workers win $ 97 mill

A Nicaraguan judge has awarded $97 million to 150 banana workers poisoned by the use of pesticides which had been banned in the United States. Standard Fruit Company, Dole Food, Dow Chemicals, Shell Oil Company and Occidental Chemical Corporation continued to distribute the banned chemicals in Nicaragua during the 1960s and 1970s.

International protest against the apartheid wall at Belin

A large graffiti drawing was sprayed on the 425-mile concrete wall cutting off the West Bank by the artist Banksy in early August. Nine drawings show the initial stages of construction of this very large prison.

According to a report posted on A-Infos, a few hundred Palestinians, internationals, and 60 Israelis also protested against the wall near Belin. In defiance of barbed wire, military warning signs and the army platoon posted at the site, activists gathered to watch as a huge puppet snake symbolically devoured a dove decorated with Palestinian flag colors.

The creation of nearby villagers did not impress the army, which sent out small groups in an attempt to provoke stone throwing. However, activists did not cross the red demarcation line that marks the boundaries of the military zones outside the wall and the non-violent demonstration continued.

Activists were surprised when asked to disperse despite the usual Friday construction day off, and then attacked. Soldiers chased activists into the village, where they were met with youngsters throwing stones. Soon they retreated releasing two internationals and 13 of the 15 arrested Israelis.

Labor unrest rocks Egypt

Workers have been occupying the Ora Misr factory since November, demanding five-month salaries for some 50 workers who suffer from asbestos-induced illnesses and cancer contracted from working at the factory. The Ora Misr case is the latest in a rising number of labor protests.

According to the annual report of the Land Center for Human Rights, Egypt saw a total of 743 worker protests from 1998 to 2003. In 2004, that number rose to 267, a 200 percent increase over the previous year.

"Most of the protests ... were against the arbitrary sacking of workers, low wages, unpaid salaries, unjustified pay cuts and worsening work conditions," the report said.

While Egyptian workers have the legal right to strike, their ability to do so is severely limited by the Unified Labor Law, which requires a permit from the General Federation of Trade Unions to strike, sit in, or protest. Even then, the protest's duration must be specified in advance so as not to affect the company's productivity. Workers say it is nearly impossible to obtain GFTU approval, and so are increasingly striking illegally.

Haiti: Levis Strauss supplier rehires 300 labor activists

All but 31 of the 350 workers dismissed in June 2004 for union-related activities at the Grupo M, a major Levis supplier in Ouanaminthe, Haiti, have now been reinstated, five months after an agreement was reached to end the long-standing conflict.

The agreement included creation of a joint union-management committee to deal with workplace issues; the rehiring with payment of lost wages to five fired unionists; the progressive rehiring, as positions open, of workers fired in June 2004, and the creation of a solidarity fund to support those workers who are waiting reinstatement.

Grupo M had received a $20 million loan from the World Bank's private sector lending agency in January 2004. For the first time ever, the IFC plan contained a provision requiring the company to respect workers' freedom of association and right to collective bargaining.

Police assault Honda strikers

Strikers at Honda Motorcycles and Scooters, India, were subjected to a brutal attack on their picket lines on July 25 at Gurgaon, as they protested the firing of 57 workers and a month-old lockout. More than 200 workers had to be hospitalized, many of them with head wounds and fractured limbs.